MYSTICISM AND CATHOLICISM

HUGH BENSON

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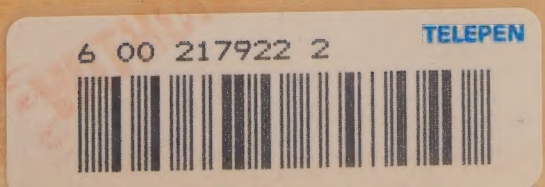

MYSTICISM *and* CATHOLICISM

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By HUGH E. M. STUTFIELD

Author of "The Roman Mischief-Maker," and "Priestcraft: A Study in Unnecessary Fictions."

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MYSTICISM *and* CATHOLICISM

CHAPTER I

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

THE last ten years have witnessed a marked widening in the popular outlook on religion, in the usual sense of that much-abused word. The spiritual atmosphere is changing with a changing world, and whole systems of thought are passing away to make room for new ones. In the religious sphere traditional orthodoxy, and aggressive "authority" based upon revelation, are on their trial. Christianity, according to the Dean of St. Paul's, "stands arraigned at the bar of public opinion"; but the popular indictment is really levelled not so much at the religion *per se* as at the institutions in which modern Christianity expresses itself: the form which it usually takes is an impeachment of certain Churches, and of the people who claim to be the official custodians of faith and morality. The notion that certain ecclesiastics are demi-gods, and that the history of their Church is the chronicle of a series of special interventions by the Deity on their behalf, and in human affairs generally, is becoming obsolete. During the War the thoughtful man, the man of imagination, cried out against the nightmare spectacle of a world in agony, and he is still numbed by a feeling of despair that such things should be. The man in the street, smitten with unaccustomed doubts as to the goodness of God, has yet graver qualms as to the magic virtue and powers claimed by His accredited ministers: he would like to see a little less piety and more true religion. The aspect of degradation which the Christian world presents to men to-day, as in much earlier times, is being used with deadly effect by the enemies of Christianity.

Under these circumstances we need not be surprised that dogma of the old rigid type is finding itself in deep waters. Conservative people watch its flounderings with genuine concern, but a much larger and more representative body of opinion will view its final submergence, which would seem to be only a question of time, with a sense of relief. Yet I would not suggest that it is religion which is to blame, but rather those perversions of religion by which men profane it. Access to the shrine of truth has become blocked by masses of débris which have been accumulating for centuries, and this has got to be cleared away. Certain priests of the temple have proved unfaithful to the trust men reposed in them. The lamp of charity, which they are paid to keep alight, burns but dimly on their altars. There are places where hatred is still preached as a social virtue, and a thing acceptable to God. Christian principles have been openly violated; flagrant crime has received condonation, and in some cases actual encouragement, from the men whose duty it was to preach the gospel of peace. Politics and religion have been, and still are, mixed up in hopeless confusion, and with the usual disastrous results. The Churches (one Church in particular) have not only failed to unite Christians, but have aggravated the existing discord. They give contradictory advice, or no advice at all, on fundamental moral issues. Certain churchmen argue that these things are " no prejudice to the sanctity of the Church " ; but we are still asking for an answer to the vital question, propounded long ago by Plato in his *Euthyphron*, " Can there be sanctity where justice and morality are lacking ? "

Many things have contributed to the formation of the public's changed attitude towards organized religion. The largest and most important of the Christian Churches has once more shown herself anti-social and unethical. She has not vindicated her claim to supreme authority by any effective exhibition of moral principle, by her faith, her works, or by the lives of her ministers. Her alleged promptings of mystical intuition in human affairs no longer impress mankind: her ordinances and policy have brought religion itself into disrepute. In the Irish rebellion, and during the War, the Papacy paltered with

high moral issues. We know now for certain that in July 1914, the Vatican was inciting Austria to attack Serbia;[1] after hostilities were opened it steadily backed the Central Powers. In private life the mischief-making arrogance of its priesthood, backed by what somebody calls an "oily film" of lay subserviency, is an unceasing cause of discord and unhappiness. It was said of St. Bernard that he "praised most those who left most misery behind them"; and his Church still maintains that she is following Christ's instructions by bringing "a sword" into the world, creating public feuds and destroying the happy relationships of family life. The consequence is that she is losing her authority over the human conscience. Moderate people argue that, if this sort of thing is religion, the world is better without it. They have not abolished their religious sanctions, but they are altering them: they think it is time for some fresh overhauling of their moral and spiritual outfit.

Turning to the Protestant Churches, and the Anglican one in particular, we are happily confronted with a far cleaner record, but also—unhappily—with much lamentable dissension that makes the judicious grieve. The English Church may survive the present crisis in her fate, just as she has survived worse ones in the past—but only on one condition. She must remain true to those vital and capital principles on which she was founded. Sure it is that her disappearance would leave a gap in the life of the community which it would be very difficult to fill. She does a vast amount of good in an unobtrusive manner, because her best elements rightly despise the advertising methods, the feathers and frills and furbelows, of her great rival. She has always been a compromise, a *via media* where dogma meets common sense half-way. While faithfully representing—at any rate in former days—the tastes and convictions of the average Englishman, she is becoming much less provincial than she used to be. Her ideals are order, moderation, good taste, and a toleration which, when pressed too far, may easily prove a source of weakness. *Episcopi*

[1] See *The Times* of May 25 and June 14, and the *National Review* for July 1923.

Angliæ semper pavidi is, I believe, a Roman Catholic criticism of the British hierarchy;[1] and it is not wholly unwarranted. Our bishops would always rather sit on the fence than on the judgment-seat; but, while sobriety and self-restraint are excellent qualities in their way, submission to dictation from within or without only acts as a postponement of the reckoning that will inevitably come sooner or later. The strength of the Establishment in times like the present lies in the fact that it is open to new ideas, and does not close the door against the new knowledge. Its hope would seem to lie in that Broad Church Party which contains many men of high character and exceptional attainments. These men have ceased to regard religion through mediæval glasses, recognize that the lines of human progress are no longer those of ecclesiastical dogmatism, look forwards rather than backwards, abjure the old-fashioned clericalism, and move with the times. They see clearly that a thorough reconstruction is necessary, if Christianity is to survive. The slogan of liberal-minded churchpeople should now be, "Modernize, or we perish."

Of the Evangelical Party I desire to speak only in terms of sincerest respect, but its ultimate prospects under existing conditions do not appear to be particularly rosy. Its fidelity to high ideals, its genuine piety, deep earnestness and sobriety command our admiration. While Catholicism keeps its eye fixed on the mediocre side of human nature, and occupies itself mainly with the trimmings of religion, extreme Protestantism maintains the old dread of joy and colour in life, and concentrates—possibly over-much—on the solid elements of morality and good citizenship. But it is useless to disguise the fact that in purely Biblical matters it is sailing against the stream of time. The leaders will not let their followers advance, but vainly try to stem the rising tide of knowledge. It is grievously hampered by a rigid spirit of immobility in the field of Biblical studies, which alienates many who would otherwise lend it their support. If it persists in this fatal obscurantism, and refuses to join in the march of human thought, I fear it must gradually wither to extinction, in which case a

[1] See *Studies in Modernism*, by the Rev. Alfred Fawkes, p. 440.

most valuable force in our national life and character will be lost to us.

In striking contrast with the sturdy individualism of the Puritans, a feeble spirit of imitation pervades a relatively small but important section of the Church. To my mind there is something rather un-English in the stained-glass-window pietism of Anglo-Catholicism, its passion for Asian mysteries and sacramental extravagances, for stage properties and perfumeries and "dressing-up." Our Anglo-Romans venerate the Holy See, and imitate the Papacy in making religion largely a matter of decorative upholstery, but they apparently forget that it was a Pope (Gregory IX) who forbade people to "bedizen the Spouse of Christ with rouge and extraneous ornaments." Nor does their fine taste in denominational bric-à-brac save them from vagaries and crudities that repel men of sound judgment. The mystical Wordsworth, who resented the power which the Church "arrogates o'er heaven's eternal door," expressed a desire for

Pure religion breathing household laws.

To those who, like the present writer, have no personal or denominational interests in the controversy, the later Tractarianism appears to be animated by the spirit of faction and to employ the tactics of the caucus. "In the internal affairs of the Church," says the Editor of the *Guardian*, "party spirit is the enemy to-day"; and we all know who are the chief culprits. Anglo-Catholicism breathes, not household laws or any ecclesiastical laws unless they be those of the Roman Church, but a lawlessness that issues in perpetual contention; and "the blight of party tactics" for which Ritualism is mainly responsible, added to its irritating travesties of Papalism, is the chief cause of the deplorable *impasse* in which the national Church now finds herself. Its cryptic methods are not engaging, its temper often the reverse of pleasant. There is an extreme section which is noisy and intriguing; it beats the Roman drum and blows the trumpet of clericalism with unceasing vigour. Dean Inge complains in his *Outspoken Essays*, and not without reason, that it is not only "contemptuously lawless," but "flouts the bishops with studied insolence."

The party machine, like that of the kindred Roman Church, grows daily in strength, and the clerical wire-puller is much in evidence: when controversy begins, fiery *doctrinaires* who rebel against the light rush in from all sides to the fray. Professing to reverence episcopal authority, Anglo-Romans habitually disobey it when it is directed against their own transgressions of the law. They are quite ready to comply so long as they are bidden to "magnify their office"; but their attempts to deify themselves, so far from raising them in popular estimation, only provoke the derision of Protestants and Papists alike.

The note of the new Tractarianism is "sanctified wisdom," an appropriate phrase for which I am indebted to the *Guardian*: and the erring or afflicted, who suffer under it, find it rather hard to bear. In Anglo-Catholics, as in their cousins of the Roman fold who describe themselves as "the Sons of God," we find the *mens conscia recti* developed to an abnormal and slightly irritating extent. When they chide us for our lack of Christian piety, we feel towards them pretty much as the unfortunate Job felt towards the "miserable comforters" and "physicians of no value" who upbraided *him* for his want of religion. "No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you. But I have understanding as well as you; what ye know, the same do I know also. I am not inferior to you." "O that ye would altogether hold your peace! and it should be your wisdom." "I also could speak as ye do: I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you. Hold your peace, let me alone, that I may speak, and let come on me what will. My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and thou sewest up mine iniquity. Hear now my reasoning, and hearken to the pleading of my lips" (Job xii, xiii, and xvi).

And now, as I write, I have the good fortune to find the Rev. Alfred Fawkes—one of the wisest among our spiritual counsellors—assuming the part of Job, and sustaining it admirably in the *Spectator* of April 26, 1924. Speaking of the Anglo-Catholics he says: "They have an excellent opinion of themselves; their accents are those of authority; they never think, they always know." Profiting by the average English

layman's indifference to religious matters, they dictate to and make bishops, "manage" Diocesan Conferences and the National Assembly, and "legislate for the Church." The present decline in English churchgoing is "the wrecker's chance," and they are taking advantage of it to "introduce the full system of Catholic devotion," and generally (as we should say) to Romanize our national Church.

Surely we have enough causes of strife and disunion in the world already, without adding needlessly to their number: we have no desire to see England become once more a cockpit of sectarianism. Let us freely admit that many Anglo-Roman priests are excellent men, and that some of them are devoted workers, but we cannot on that account admit their claim to be the predominating influence in the Church. It is becoming increasingly clear that their extremists are at heart more Roman than the Romanists. Some of them, as they thank God that they are not as those Protestants are, recall the strictures of Pope Gregory IX upon certain people who were "distended like a bladder with the spirit of vanity"; and when they parade the streets, wearing the raiment of saints and the demeanour of martyrs on their way to the stake, in the hope that they will thereby "convert England to Christianity," we know very well the sort of Christianity that they have in store for us. But most sensible Englishmen do not want religion of this type, and will not have it: they would rather (to borrow the phrase of a Conservative Duke) "have a little honest, clean heathenism instead." Nor are we convinced by the professions of extreme moderation which certain Ritualists utter: when they tell us that the changes they advocate will make very little difference we are more impressed with their audacity than with their candour. "It is not to the Catholicism of the Middle Ages," says Mr. Fawkes, "but to that of the intolerant and decadent Counter-Reformation, that we are invited to return."

Public dissatisfaction with Anglo-Catholicism and its ways[1]

[1] See a letter from Sir Frederick Pollock, written in a vein of quiet irony, on the presumptuous dogmatism of Anglo-Catholics when dealing with questions of marriage law (*The Times*, December 1, 1922).

has lately been aggravated by the secret Malines "conversations," and by the ill-advised action of the Archbishop of Canterbury in giving his official cognizance and sanction to these subterranean workings of the new sacerdotalism. Rome is always haunted by the blissful vision of a converted England: she hopes that by frequent casting of her nets she will one day be rewarded with a miraculous draught of Papalized fishes. The misconceptions of the Curial mind on this question appear to be incurable. And, as the thirsty hart pants for cooling streams, as the moth desires the star, so does Anglo-Catholicism, on its side, yearn for reunion with Rome. Regardless of snubs, of patent indications that their company is not desired by the Vatican except upon impossible conditions, certain Ritualists persist in forcing their attention on the Papist hierarchy. The same moths are now fluttering round the same old candle, intent on singeing the nation's wings as well as their own. There has naturally been a great hubbub in Protestant circles, and the breach between the Free Churches and the Establishment has been perceptibly widened. No self-respecting English non-Catholic wants to accept Romanist doctrine or to make his submission to an Italian priest, and we all know that these are the only terms that Rome will accept. "All discussions," as Cardinal Bourne says quite plainly, "are mere waste of time until this doctrine (Papal infallibility) is accepted." It is not a question merely of Sacraments and Orders. Submission to the Pope and acknowledgement of his infallibility must be conditions precedent to all negotiations. The real division, Catholics point out, between Rome and the rest of the world is "on the question of the nature and constitution of the Church."

The unmannerly check give by the Curia to Anglican advances in 1896, the outrageous conduct of the Papacy during the last fifteen years, its persistent anti-British bias and action, surely prove it to be an undesirable associate for England. There is a great rift between the British people and the Latin Church: our ways are not her ways, and we may be thankful that they are never likely to be. Too little has been made of these points in the controversy, too much of mere

doctrinal differences, though the sacrifice of intellectual sincerity does seem a high price to pay for a union that could never be genuine. Romanists argue, not without force, that there can be no "reunion" of Churches, because it is their irreversible opinion that there is one true Church and one only. The secrecy maintained by the English delegates during the conferences has been severely criticized, and with excellent reason: such things should be done above-board and in the full light of day. Again, why was a Belgian prelate approached, rather than Cardinal Bourne, who knows a great deal more about English affairs? Much has been said about Cardinal Mercier's attractive personality, but it is difficult to regard him as a true friend of England. After the War, unmindful of all that his country owes to ours, he and his brother Belgian prelates espoused the cause of Sinn Fein, raised money for the rebels, and generally held Great Britain up to public odium. The English Church has been put in a false position by the manœuvres of Ritualists, and has laid herself open to a second humiliating rebuff: the whole thing savours too much of a S.O.S. from the Establishment. And what, after all, is Anglo-Catholicism but the sham of a sham, a weakly imitation of an alien model, a thing wholly at variance with our national genius and temperament?

Another subject of legitimate criticism is the too frequent intervention of Anglican ministers in party controversy. Politics and piety go ill together; the function of the latter is to deal with the broad principles of right and wrong, and it should be chary of going further. When the angel of religion stoops to folly of this kind her wings are apt to get soiled. St. Paul has some unkind remarks about certain "spiritual" persons of his day who gave themselves great airs and "reached out beyond their compass." Spiritual persons of a similar type are not unknown here now, and I venture to suggest that they are reaching out beyond their compass when they visit political opponents with spiritual censure. The claim of the Churches to superiority in ethical judgment is not one that can be admitted nowadays. Nonconformist ministers turning the conventicle into a caucus-chamber used to be the chief

offenders in this respect, but lately Anglican priests and bishops have been launching clerical thunderbolts against all and sundry : one feels that the Church would like to impose ecclesiastical penalties on those who differ from her about the ordering of purely mundane affairs. A considerable section of the clergy tries to identify Communism with Christianity, and forms an important wing of the Socialist party. If you happen to disagree with their views on economic questions, or to harbour doubts as to the practical utility of the League of Nations, you are liable to be denounced as an " unchristian " person or a Pagan. " We are weary of debating societies," said Bishop Gore some time ago ; but he and many other ecclesiastics have a touching faith in those theological debating societies called Church Councils (a subject on which I shall have more to say later on) ; and the polyglot Parliament now assembled in Switzerland is apparently no less sacrosanct in their eyes. Personally, I regard the League, not as a religious cult, but as a noble ideal which may some day bear good fruit ; yet we may surely claim the right to criticize the operations and tendencies of the present anomalous gathering at Geneva, without being anathematized by our spiritual superiors. Lastly, the sufferings of Germany, a just punishment of her crimes, wring the episcopal heart and evoke denunciations of " oppression " ; ravaged France and the woes of the shamefully misused Irish loyalists get scant sympathy.

The decline of public interest in ecclesiastical affairs is undeniable, and the *dicta* of our leading Anglican that the Church " is still lamentably behind the best lay conscience," and that " institutional religion does not represent the gospel of Christ," are felt to be true. Men are asking certain pertinent questions. " Are the human products of institutionalism in its stiffest and most uncompromising form, the Latin Church, the superiors or even the equals of other people ethically, economically, or intellectually ? " " Which, among the numerous sects that are for ever fighting and calling each other names, is the true Church of God ? " Does any denomination really enjoy a monopoly of Divine grace and favour through its sacraments and priesthood, or possess exclusive knowledge ? As they all

flatly contradict one another they cannot all be right. Some must go under, but, as Renan observed, reason and knowledge are only fatal to false gods : nor can the truth hurt any honest man. Amid the fog and flux of current theological opinion certain definite conclusions are emerging. There can be no permanent abiding-place in the world of to-day for the obscurantist tyranny that would keep the human mind in chains, or for the dogmatism that threatens and persecutes. Newman's theory, that Christianity came into the world as an idea rather than as an institution,[1] is being adopted in a way, and to an extent, that he would hardly have approved.

Briefly, then, two types of religion are now offered to the Christian—the institutional and the personalist, the religion of authority and the religion of the spirit. Institutionalism still has many powerful supporters, but its star would seem to be in the descendant. Systematized theology is yielding to the superior attractions of psychological " inwardness " ; the centre of religion is shifting from blind reliance on external direction, whose validity is becoming more and more questionable, to a trust in something more intimate and personal. The corporate idea in religion may be expected to dwindle by degrees ; and the house which the ecclesiastical Jack built in Rome, with so much labour and ingenuity, will eventually cease to be regarded as a fitting habitation for earnest and inquiring souls. A new form of spiritual discernment is arising, which makes a strong appeal to the best minds in the Church ; there is a growing conviction, based on the emotional experiences of individuals, of divine realities to which the inner life may bear testimony. In this way it is hoped that religion will become more real—less a thing of outward observances, mechanical forms, charms and incantations : it will also act as a sedative upon the passionate bigotry of which dogmatic theology is the parent.

In such times as these, when a belief in private inspiration is loosening the fetters imposed by the old clericalism, the mystical idea naturally forces itself to the front. Faith is calling out loudly for reinforcements. She will ally herself—on terms—

[1] *Essay on Development*, p. 115.

with science; and we are assured that a new Christianity will emerge, which, while embodying all that is valuable in the old tradition and the new knowledge, will be a combination of mysticism and charity. I am sure there is ample room for such a religion: we shall all heartily welcome, in a field where it is greatly needed, the advent of a religious charity which is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, rejoiceth in truth, and is altogether something better than a tinkling cymbal. In such a Church, people think, spiritual insight might possibly revive, the old prophetic inspiration recover its pristine vigour. "Spiritual persons" may grow less meddlesome and domineering, and otherwise comport themselves with a becoming modesty: all things will be done, as they ought to be done, "decently and in order." Dogma, it is contended, will be the skeleton, mysticism the life-blood of the Christian body, the essence, as it always has been, of true religion. And in this country, at any rate, the prospects of the new dispensation appear to be good; the omens are not unfavourable to the suppression, or at least the mitigation, of clerical absolutism censoring opinion and shutting out the light of truth. A spirit of inquiry is in the air, a healthy latitudinarianism pervades the best clerical circles. It fortunately happens that our most influential Churchman is a man of real genius who combines wide and sound scholarship with a singular intellectual probity. He is neither Catholic nor Protestant, but proclaims himself to be a "Christian Platonist," a form of Christianity which was unfamiliar to most churchgoers of the last century. With him are a number of other very able men, and also some lesser lights; and all these occasionally preach doctrines which would have horrified our grandmothers.[1] We shall all, it would seem, have to widen the scope of our religious vision, and approach reality by other roads then those we have hitherto trodden. St. Augustine tells us that he had come to Christ

[1] The Bishop of Aberdeen, preaching in St. Paul's Cathedral on March 22, 1924, said that the Anglican Church, unless it adapted itself to the new conditions, would "go the way of the dinosaurus and the brontosaurus." He appealed to Sunday School teachers to "break loose from a spongy Church paralysed by the dead hand of the past," and to make religious teaching a real joy for children.

by way of Cicero and Plotinus. The Dean of St. Paul's does not make Cicero his prophet, but he has written an excellent book on Plotinus. Some people regard his position in the Church as rather anomalous, but he hopes that room will be found for him in her fold : it will certainly be a bad day for the Establishment when men of his type are rejected. He, like St. Augustine and many of his successors, is a scion of the old Greek philosophic stock. As his great forerunner acted as a bridge between the ancient and mediæval worlds, so the Dean seems destined to be one of the chief links between the old dogmatic Christianity and the new rationalism with its strong tinge of mysticism.

CHAPTER II

WHAT IS MYSTICISM ?

Since the prevailing element, so far as we can see, in the religion of to-morrow will be a higher and more enlightened mysticism, in which the clerical mediator will play a less important part than heretofore, it behoves us to examine carefully what mysticism is, and how it works. So vast a subject can only be dealt with piecemeal, and in the following pages I propose to concentrate mainly on mysticism in its historical aspect, and also on the practical question of its influence upon human conduct and life in general. My desire is neither to attack nor defend it, but to trace the development of mystical theory and practice, to examine the truth of its alleged manifestations, and the effect of its workings on mind and character. Etymologically considered, the mystic (*μύστης*, from *μύω*, to close the eyes or mouth) is a man who closes his eyes to all external things and "keeps mum" about the divine mysteries into which he has been initiated. This reticence, by the way, is not always observed: many mystics are very talkative persons, and retail their experiences at inordinate length. When they "see things" they are not happy till they have told us all about it. The essence of mysticism in all the higher religions is the endeavour to obtain contact and union with the Divine by means of rapt contemplation and ecstasy, withdrawal from all earthly feelings and interests, and by the development of the intuitional faculties as a means of discerning spiritual truth and reality. It pins its faith to insight rather than inductive analysis, believing that everything "being what it is, is symbolic of something more." It claims to reinforce religion with a higher faculty, to endow man with a nobler attribute—intuitive reason supernaturally acquired;

belief in the inspiration of the individual is the keynote of mysticism.

In this way, it is said, the intuitionist, having closed every avenue of perception by the senses, and withdrawn the mind from everything external into itself, enters by the gateway of ecstasy into the larger world of the unseen and renders himself fitted to receive, after certain preliminary processes, divine illumination immediately from above. He becomes the heir of the wisdom of the ages, obtains access to the holiest shrines, and is admitted in a sort of divine stupor into the freedom of the universe. Night falls, as Vaughan puts it,[1] in his poetical fashion, on reason, memory, and imagination; the soul lies asleep in a void of silence and inanition, waiting expectantly the embrace of Union, entranced in a deep slumber of passivity, till Eros comes to waken her with a kiss.

In his less sentimental moods the mystic's goal is spiritual and moral Perfection; and this can only be achieved by a steep and arduous climb, where many adventures await the explorer, up the giddy heights on whose summit the goddess is figured as dwelling. He lives in hope of some day receiving illumination in a flash, and strives to reach God by the shortest cut. Religious mysticism is defined by Dean Inge as "an immediate communion, real or supposed, between the human soul and the Soul of the World, or the Divine Spirit."[2] The definition is not entirely satisfactory, because, like so many others, it fails to be sufficiently comprehensive, but the remarks which follow it are of real value in that they draw attention to the assumption which underlies all the higher mysticism—namely, that there is a real affinity between the individual soul and the great immanent Spirit. The words "real or supposed" are especially important, and will demand our attention later on. I will not attempt to succeed where so many others have failed, or venture upon a definition of a thing so bewildering in the variety of its aspects, or a word that has

[1] *Hours with the Mystics*, vol. i, p. 86.

[2] *Outspoken Essays*, p. 230. Numerous other definitions are given in the first Appendix to the Dean's *Christian Mysticism*; and the subject is admirably dealt with in Vaughan's *Hours with the Mystics* and the Rev. Rufus Jones's *Studies in Mystical Religion*.

such a multiplicity of meanings attached to it. Let us rather be frankly unscientific and appropriately cryptic, and call mysticism—as it appears in its nobler forms—the romance of the soul in its quest for the Ideal, the Spirit of the Cloud on the mountain-top of Perfection.

When we leave the realm of poetic imagery or vague generalization, and examine the matter on its philosophical or scientific side, we are immediately confronted by a number of difficulties. What the plain man wants, beyond everything else, is to know the facts so far as they can be ascertained. He is growing tired of "authority" as laid down by mediæval schools and schoolmen; and when the mystics assert that they are supernaturally guided and inspired he demands, if not absolute proof, at least reasonable grounds for believing the assertion to be true. He asks whether their visions and experiences and illuminations have any ontological significance, or possess any life-value beyond their value for the individual. God, according to the authors of the *Pascendi* Encyclical of Pius X, can only be proved by argument. "On the contrary," says the mystical philosopher, "the existence of God is an empirical truth, nay, the ground of all experience. . . . Speculation is the whole vision, contemplation of everything that is in God."[1] But has the faculty that we term intuition any backing of reality? Is it a biological fact, a separate living force, or merely an expression of certain chemical elements in the human organization? Is the mystical state normal or abnormal, a vital experience of the soul or a poetic fantasy of the personal consciousness? Are we being hypnotized by big-sounding words, soothed by luscious tropes and images, fogged by nebulous rhetoric? "The light is all," as Emerson says, but we should like to make sure that the light we are following is not a will-o'-the-wisp. And, lastly, if the claims of mysticism can be substantiated, will it teach us anything or improve our mental, physical, and moral health?

The suggestion is made, and there is much good evidence in support of it, that playing tricks with our consciousness may prove to be a dangerous game. Human nature cannot

[1] Schwegler's *History of Philosophy*, p. 305.

always exist at the apex of its being; so rarefied an atmosphere may be too much for it. Emotion, no less than intellect, may lead us astray, and the transformation it effects may be downwards instead of upwards. Not everybody is fitted to climb the Matterhorn; the man who seeks to fly heavenwards on the pinions of contemplative ecstasy may end by coming a spiritual cropper. "He has wished to know more than he should," said John XXII (in a Bull dated 1329), of the great German mystic, Eckhardt; and we may agree with the Pope in thinking that there is such a thing as over-speculation in transcendental matters. Just as the Miltonic Satan—that glorified arch-rebel and disseminator of heretical "poison"—induced Eve to develop her *ego* and embark on a course of the Higher Culture with fatal results, so the mediæval mystic, straining up into the empyrean, tried to make gods of himself and his fellows, but succeeded only too often in turning them into beasts.[1]

It must not be supposed, however, that the mystic is always in a state of transport, or that he despises the ordinary forms of conventional devotion. Prayer, for example, has always been, and still remains, an essential element in mystical religion. But prayer, for the true mystic, is not a supplication for personal goods in this world or for salvation from torment in the next. It is rather a form of spiritual exercise, "the contemplation of life from the highest point of view." The mystic recognizes that asking for private benefits at other people's expense is little more than a rather mean form of begging, a petition (as I think Emerson says) to be allowed, and empowered, to thieve from somebody else. I remember that when I was a boy I used to entreat Heaven to assist me in making runs in school cricket matches. My son, who was a fine boy-bowler, tells me that he prayed that he might get wickets. Both of us were unconsciously trying to gain an unfair advantage over the opposing side.

As regards the psychic visions of mystics, a great cloud of

[1] He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest;
In doubt to deem himself a god, or beast.
POPE: *Essay on Man.*

witnesses speaks to their objective reality, and many theologians accept their evidence as decisive. But others treat these visions as at best symbolic and inadequate, while sceptics class them with pure hallucinations. It is admitted by strongly religious men that in the vast majority of cases "the claim of the mystics has to be set aside as unreal. True mystics find themselves in bad company."[1] "Experience" is an undoubted fact, but much of it is determined from within rather than from without; as Tyrrell said, we must distinguish between the imagery and the reality of the transcendental. St. Paul himself (2 Cor. xii. 1–4) seemed to be very doubtful about the objective value of his visions, and he is generally considered to take the subjective view of their reality. Dean Inge says that the Apostle's experiences are of great psychological interest, but seem to suggest "a recollection of Rabbinical pseudo-science."[2] He also points out that the old masters of spiritual life, such as St. Augustine and John of the Cross, attached little importance to visions and cautioned people against inducing them artificially. Such "childish toys" often come from the Devil, and those which contain a sensuous element were regarded as specially dangerous—a subject I shall deal with later on. On the other hand, it is claimed on behalf of mysticism that, for neurotic or hysterical subjects, it has a distinct hygienic value:[3] if they did not have visions and experiences they would probably go off their heads, and it is anyhow better to be a mystic than a lunatic.

Symbolism is in any case the life-blood of mysticism, which identifies it with speculative truth; our tuition, to borrow Emerson's words, "is through emblems and indirections." Another writer tells us that true mysticism "is the belief that everything, being what it is, is symbolic of something more." The ordinary man, without knowing it, lives and works through symbols: he will not give up his life for a theory, but he will die willingly for a bit of bunting which is an emblem of

[1] *The Month*, February 1823.

[2] *Christian Mysticism*, p. 63.

[3] *An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, by R. H. Thouless, pp. 258, 277.

the theory. We all desire mental toys and masks for screening the invisible, and many of us, as Pascal says, are more interested in phrases than in the reality behind them. Nevertheless every one of us has his own theories, illusions, and sentiments which he will not lightly have disturbed; and each claims, as of right, the privilege of choosing such symbols to represent them as appear to him most significant. For these and other reasons we should be careful in the choice of the images we employ, and try to maintain a definite connexion between the thing said and the idea intended to be conveyed. All language is but symbolism; words are but ciphers, images, the signs of things; and poetry is little more than a symbolic code for conveying lofty ideas.

The mystic, having no adequate language in which to describe his experience, is forced to deal largely with allegories and "picture-language," but he is apt to let his imagery run riot, to fog our minds with analogies that are more fanciful than real. His symbols are often lacking in flexibility, and therefore unsatisfactory. Emerson describes the religions of the world as the ejaculations of a few imaginative men, and says that mysticism often "consists in the mistake of an accidental and individual symbol for a universal one." Moreover, the symbols and images employed are sometimes so complex that a key is required to make them intelligible. We have to be on our guard against the pseudo-mysticism which, from interested motives, wraps up inanity in a cotton-wool cloud of meaningless verbiage. Dogmatic theology, for example, is described as being the dialectical development of mystical symbols, but some of its professors seem chiefly concerned with fuddling our brains with obscure rhetoric; they have a firm belief in the salutary nature of calculated obfuscation.

The same charge is often brought against metaphysics, and a word may be said in conclusion as to the relation between mysticism and that branch of ontological speculation which is called "philosophy." From one angle mysticism may be described as the emotional side of metaphysics: conversely, metaphysics appears as mysticism intellectualized. It seeks to discover the laws which govern the framing of our intellectual

conceptions, while mysticism would attain at a bound, and by intuitive revelation, its alleged vision of the Absolute. The metaphysician, as in the case of Hegel's great mentor, Schelling, often slides easily, and by a sort of natural transition, into mysticism; and such mystics as "Dionysius," the Gnostics, and Jacob Behmen subside readily into theosophy. The nobler mystic is impressed with the difficulty of adequately expressing infinite matter in logical form, and ends not infrequently by abandoning himself to the creations of his own fantasy. It sometimes happens that sensuous perceptions are the controlling elements in his mind; he has visions of a haunting loveliness that is to him the supreme reality behind the veil of sense, in which case he concentrates on that æsthetic perception which is the ideal of the artist and poet. He finds, not only design, but ever-present beauty in the framework of the universe;[1] like the Greeks, he believes that the Good and the Beautiful are pretty much the same thing. The concord of subject and object, which is the problem of transcendental philosophy, is best realized in action by the artistic faculty, and the work of art is regarded as the supreme achievement of the human intelligence. Schelling, "the Plotinus of Berlin," developed these theories at considerable length and invested religious romanticism with a poetical philosophy. He failed to find an appropriate formula in which his metaphysical notions could be satisfactorily expressed, and so was drawn to a species of mystical æstheticism. Art, for such a man, is the one eternal revelation, the path to his life's work, and God becomes "a direct object of æsthetic intuition."[2] He abdicates the busy world outside, that he may reign in a larger kingdom of the ideal, which he creates for himself.

I do not think I shall be very far wrong if I say that these notions largely permeate a good deal of that modern æsthetic theory which virtually makes spiritual life a branch of æsthetics: there seems to be an illustrative symbolism in certain paintings of our time where the symbolism is everything and

[1] Mr. Bertrand Russell says that there is no such thing, strictly speaking, as the "universe," but I use the word for want of a better.

[2] Schwegler's *History of Philosophy*, p. 298.

nothing else counts in comparison. In our æsthetic literature, too, the same ideas are apparent, and objective beauty is restored to her pedestal. Mr. Clive Bell, to name one of several modern writers upon art, is the Schelling of Post-Impressionism. In his book, *Art*, he gives a theory of Significant Form which to my taste has a strong mystical savour. Such form, such combinations of lines and colours, make—if I understand him rightly—a universal appeal to people of taste and culture: they have a general validity. The feelings they awaken are independent of time and place, because the kingdom of art is not of this world. We feel that they are pure forms, Mr. Bell says, and that there is something behind them, a something that has the significance of ultimate reality and is felt as an end in itself. "Ultimate reality" is a philosophic term, but the artist's alleged apprehension of it, the emotion it stirs in him, the power that it lends to his hand and eye, and the "extraordinary exaltation and complete detachment" which ensue the contemplation of pure form appear to me to have a distinctly mystical quality. The whole question is a very abstruse one; and I do not deem wholly unreasonable the complaint of a well-known art-critic that discussing art with certain champions of the new æsthetic theories is like "talking to the nebular hypothesis." One thing seems fairly clear: the artist is a pure mystic when he infers the inner reality, the God in everything, the universal in the particular, from the emotions which he assumes to have been created by it. It would appear, in short, impossible for the contemplative artist to escape mysticism, and I do not see that there is any particular reason why he should try to do so.

CHAPTER III

THE OLD BASIC PRINCIPLES

The fundamental principles and practice of mystics show little variation throughout the ages. Mysticism has no genealogy. It is no tradition or ready-made commodity, but a state of feeling and thinking about the universe common to men of all races and of every place and time. The same set of ideas, the same groundwork of strikingly uniform theories, experiences, emotions, and other mental phenomena, are apparent in the mystics of ancient India, Greece, and Egypt as in those of our later days. All the great Teachers of mankind had a similar message to deliver, the same guiding thoughts, the same basic principles, which each expressed in his own way. There was no special mystical revelation delivered at any one time to any particular sect. No one Church has the right to claim any special illumination peculiar to itself, or to bully non-jurors: no single philosophy possesses a monopoly of inspiration. To take one instance, the Platonic theory of Ideas —of an unseen Reality behind the world of visible phenomena— is probably derived from Oriental sources. It is mystical no less than metaphysical, and it appears and reappears in slightly varied forms throughout the mystical systems of the Neo-Platonists and other successors of Plato down to our time.

The farther back we go in the history of mystical religion the more we are impressed by the unity of faith and doctrine which is revealed in all essential points. Research is continually indicating fresh family resemblances between the myths and ritual of East and West, North and South, in every era. So great is the congruity that some people hold our religious ideas, and the teachings in which they are embodied, to be all derived from a single common origin, a general fund of primitive belief—a sort of early *depositum fidei*—hidden in the mists of

a very remote antiquity. M. Maeterlinck asserts that an Indian catalogue of stars is 58,000 years old. He believes in a great mysterious river of thought " which since the beginning of history has been flowing beneath all the religions, all the faiths, and all the philosophies." [1] He is of opinion that the source of this river is to be found in India, and that the sacred teaching which we find at the bottom of all religions, in the shape of mysteries, secret doctrines, etc., spread into Egypt and Persia and Chaldea, filtered into Palestine, Greece, and Northern Europe, " finally reaching China and even America, where the Aztec civilization was merely a more or less distorted reproduction of the Egyptian civilization."

Not everybody will agree with M. Maeterlinck's theories, or be willing to follow him in the rather startling conclusions at which he arrives. Egypt and (as very recent discoveries show) Chaldea are rival claimants to priority of civilization. Most of us will remain sceptical concerning the awe-inspiring doctrines and " unuttered wisdom " alleged to be stored in the archives of Tibetan and Hindu Mahatmas, and let out piecemeal and at intervals to people like Gandhi and Madame Blavatsky. On the other hand, I cannot but think that much of M. Maeterlinck's main thesis is worthy of consideration. Especially does there seem to be a growing probability that, from the historical standpoint at any rate, India was the birthplace of our fundamental imaginings, the cradle of contemplative religion and the nobler philosophy. There is force, too, in his argument based on the loftiness of the older speculations, which are reproduced—and by no means improved—in the works of men whose teaching forms the groundwork of much modern theology. The religion of the ancient Indian sages was beyond question remarkably complete in its broad outlines ; and, not only is it complete, according to M. Maeterlinck, " but the further back we go the more perfect it is, the more unadulterated, the more closely related to the loftiest speculations of our modern agnosticism." And modern scholarship, it would appear, tends more and more to set back the date of the earliest Indian manuscripts, to enhance, rather

[1] *The Great Secret*, by Maurice Maeterlinck, pp. 5, 18, 24.

than to diminish, the sublimity of these old metaphysical and ethical systems. It suggests the possibility that they may be (as M. Maeterlinck asserts they are) merely an enfeebled echo of sublimer doctrines in still earlier ages. How, when, or where these doctrines were promulgated nobody, so far as I am aware, has ventured to suggest. A recent well-informed writer on Buddhism affirms that that religion started among men of the Aryan race who were not Asiatics; but others maintain that the Aryans introduced very little into India except their language.

There is no more fascinating study than the search for the pedigree and origins of religious cults and ritual. As a science it is still in its infancy, but enough is known to make it fairly clear that the main principles and dogmas, the primal facts and essential ideas, of the world's great religions are tolerably constant and of very great age: the philosophy which formed the framework of their creeds was probably part of the common mental stock of the best thinkers in primitive times. To say this is not necessarily to detract from the later faiths such intrinsic value as they possess; but it does show that the prevailing belief in their entirely original and distinctive character is a mistaken one, and it weakens the pretensions of certain sects in our day to special authority and a monopoly of celestial enlightenment. Every day makes it clearer that the ancients had their mysteries and brotherhoods and sacraments, their notions of occult initiation, symbolism, and sacramental grace, purifications and spiritual illuminations, similar to ours. There were saviour-gods who suffered and rose again, Trinities, incarnations, virgin-births, resurrections, atonements, and the like, many centuries before our era. Many events and narratives in our sacred books are paralleled in writings of earlier date. It may be necesssary, therefore, to revise our conceptions of the significance and importance of later religions in the history of mankind's mental development.

In this connexion it is worth noting that the older and more sublime mysticism of India did not base its authority upon any pretended infallibility concerning matters beyond

human comprehension. On the contrary, it confessed its entire ignorance of the nature, attributes, and purposes of the Absolute ; its foundation, as M. Maeterlinck says, was a splendid and fundamental agnosticism. And the wise men in other lands made a no less frank confession of their utter bewilderment : like many people in our time they regarded the whole universe as one large note of interrogation. " Teach thy tongue to say, ' I do not know,' " was the shrewd advice of an ancient Hebrew Rabbi. In China Confucius spoke of things transcendental " with an almost agnostic reserve."[1] His Superior Man made truth the supreme quest, and readiness to inquire in cases of doubt was one of his nine points of virtue. The Mystic Lao-tse, whose virgin-mother conceived him when thrilled with emotion by the sight of a falling star, taught that the grand secret of the Eternal Tau, or Absolute, could not be learned by erudition, but by simplicity of heart and life. And, long before their day, on the ice-girt slopes of the towering Himalaya, in the low-lying valleys of Egypt or the torrid Soudan, pious men sang their hymns of praise to the Unknown God, piled abstraction on abstraction, and affirmed their belief in the soul's immortality : not even the wisest among them claimed to fathom the mystery of the why, the whence, and the whither of man, or the origin and secrets of the universe. Ages earlier than the First Dynasty there was a civilization of a high order in the valley of the Nile, when men's minds seem to have been profoundly concerned with the problems of the great Hereafter, and with the best ways of securing rest and happiness for the souls of the departed. And a still earlier civilization, perhaps, is being unearthed in Mesopotamia. From the watch-towers of Chaldea Eastern sages and astronomers marked the path of the stars, shuddering at the evil destiny which the Unknown Powers, malignant divinities in the celestial heights,[2] held in store for suffering humanity ; and, as they trembled, they puzzled their brains in wonder as to what was the meaning

[1] *History of Religion*, by F. J. Gould, p. 97 sq.

[2] Plato and Aristotle affirmed the heavenly bodies to be divinities. According to Philo Judæus, the stars were viceroys of Jehovah and ruled the material world.

of it all. He who says he knows God or His attributes, these wise men affirmed, shall never know Him, even in part. The only road to knowledge, they said in anticipation of Socrates and other sages, was to confess one's utter lack of knowledge; the true ignorance was to pretend to a knowledge which no man possessed, or ever could possess. The Egyptian Osiris was a blackamoor, according to Plutarch and other authorities, but he was also a "dark god" in the sense that he could not be understood, and never would be understood. The greatest profanity, the most flagrant impiety, was a fraudulent claim to Divine illumination.

Speculative mysticism inevitably tends more or less towards pantheism, and it is in India that the pantheist finds his spiritual home. Pantheism holds that the sum of things is God, who comprehends all possible existence, is identified with everything in the universe, and manifests Himself in all created things. "God is within you," the Hindu mystics proclaimed, and their successors in all times and places have repeated the saying: seek Him there, and you will find Him. He is the only real Unity, all His creatures are but a finite phase of the infinite Being. He utterly transcends knowledge, cannot be an object for human understanding, and has no characteristics that can be expressed in language or thought—a "nameless Nothing" who is all in all, an Infinite Negative who is yet the real nature of things. He has no virtues, qualities, or attributes. In the presence of such a mystery the intellect is dumb, and if we are foolish enough to prate about Him we do so at our peril. The loud-voiced profession of infallible certitude, in which our modern pundits indulge, would have greatly shocked these wise old men.

Negative doctrines of this kind found its fullest expression in India thousands of years ago. In the Rig-Veda, "the most authentic echo of the most immemorial traditions," as M. Maeterlinck says (*The Great Secret*, p. 27), and in the Sama-Veda we find a majestic expression of fundamental but reverent agnosticism, coupled with a "magnificent confession of ignorance." Our knowledge consists of nescience, our vision is darkness. In the Supreme Being the whole universe is con-

tained, and it issued from Him. He is entwined and enwoven in all created things: the gods themselves cannot comprehend this Supreme Mover who has preceded them all. "He is infinitely ancient, infinitely unknown. He is the unification of all material, intellectual, and moral forms of all existing beings. He is the sole primordial germ, undisclosed by all, the unknown deep, the uncreated substance of the unknown. 'No, No, is his name'; and all things waver perpetually between 'All things are' and 'Nothing exists.'"

Speculative mysticism of this type passed over into Africa and Western Europe; after being systematized by the Greeks, it blossomed forth in Plotinus, who flourished 250 A.D., at Alexandria. He was followed by the monk-mystic and theosophical pantheist, the so-called Dionysius the Areopagite, who pretended that his works, written in the fifth century, were those of Dionysius the convert of St. Paul in the Areopagus. This clever impostor was duly canonized by the Roman Church, because he invented an ingenious theory of celestial hierarchies, graded after the fashion of her ecclesiastical system, and an exact correspondence between the angelic orders in Heaven and the priestly orders on earth. For many centuries he remained the oracle of her greatest mystics, a leading light of her most authoritative theologians. Later on, in the ninth century, his teaching was adopted by Erigena, who translated his books; it was reproduced by the fourteenth-century German mystics, and now some of it has turned up again, quite unexpectedly, in Mr. G. B. Shaw's expansive play, *Back to Methuselah*.

The ancient doctrine of the East is supplemented in the writings of St. "Dionysius" by an imaginative luxuriance that is peculiarly the author's own. Pantheism and monotheism get mixed up in a hopeless jumble, and we find ourselves entangled in a dense thicket of cosmic contradictions. At one moment the mystic seems to be scaling the peaks of spiritual ecstasy, at another he plunges into the gulfs of nihilism. The human intellect is a mischievous obstruction, we are told; then suddenly we find reason exalted to the topmost pinnacle. But the main thesis is that reasoning and perception are nothing

but " delusive witch-lights in the Dark Night of Faith " ;[1] the soul's journey must be along the mystical path of Renunciation. After reading the Areopagite's lucubrations we are left in wonderment as to what it all means—if, in fact, it means anything at all. We imagine the Gnostics, Kabbalists, Neo-Platonists, mediæval Alchemists, Hermetists, and Rosicrucians, a goodly company of phrase-makers and word-spinners, gathering together across the Styx, and joining hands in a grand medley of mystification. I picture to myself " Dionysius " encountering Mr. Bernard Shaw in a heaven where there are no harps or cherubim with " scented locks," none of the " bric-à-brac rococo " decoration that Tyrrell satirized, and greeting our philosophic playwright as a kindred mystic. Here the pair of them will spend a portion of eternity in contemplating heaven alone knows what ; and then, the long period of purgative contemplation over, their twin souls and " bodiless minds " (to quote a phrase of Mr. Shaw's) will " whirl in pure intelligence for ever."

St. " Dionysius " joins the Indians in affirming that God is best described by negatives : Divinity emerges as little more that what somebody terms " a convenient image of the Unknowable." He is the absolute No-thing which is above all existence. Our highest knowledge of Him consists in mystic ignorance. In omni-nescience we approach Omniscience ; the Path of Negation is the highway of mysticism.[2] The more we deny concerning God, the more we remove the veils which figurative assertions of His attributes and qualities have set up. He is pure Indifference, a nameless Abstraction or Brocken-phantom who is neither good nor bad—of whom, indeed, nothing can be predicated. (This ecclesiastical Neo-Platonism here follows Aristotle, who allowed the gods no virtues : as Flaubert said of the French æsthetes, they are " neither vicious nor virtuous, but above all that.") By refraining from using our intellect or imagination we simplify ourselves, and are united in ecstasy with God. Evil is that which is " nohow, nowhere,

[1] See *François de Fénelon*, by Lord St. Cyres, p. 90.
[2] Vaughan's *Hours with the Mystics*, i. 116.

and no-thing" ; "God sees evil as good."[1] Pseudo-philosophy or jargon of this kind fills thousands of pages in the works of mystical writers. We are told that this is only the accident, not the essence, of mysticism ; but to me it appears that the essence (whatever it be) is most frequently buried beneath the accident. For the present it is enough to say that the principle of agnosticism bulks very largely in the teaching of the greatest and most authoritative exponents of what may fairly be termed the higher mysticism. "Woe to him who has but a hazy conception concerning the gods," says a late Greek philosopher,[2] but I fear the majority of the great contemplatives are in this sad case. They make us feel that dogma—even dogma reduced to a "skeleton"—appears as an unauthorized trespasser in the transcendental field, the region of the unknown and the probably unknowable : the wise man will suspend his judgment concerning matters beyond his ken.

And, lastly, strange as it may seem to the followers of traditional orthodoxy, out of this profound and pantheistic agnosticism of the Hindus there arose, long before the advent of Christianity, one of the sublimest systems of practical morality which the world has ever known. Beside it the accommodating ethic of our dogmatic "moral theology" (which may be theological, but certainly is not moral), with its truckling to human weakness, and its opportunist compromising with downright evil, cuts a very poor figure indeed. To the ancient Indian, good works were more important than outward devotional observance ; faith was not the supreme moral exigency, nor was morality regarded as "secondary and subordinate" to unquestioning obedience or mechanical formula. Ethical perfection occupied its proper position in the scale of human virtues, while priestly ministrations possessed no supreme religious value, and could not compensate for

[1] Inge's *Christian Mysticism*, ch. iii; and see Rufus Jones's *Studies in Mystical Religion*, ch. vi.

[2] Plato, at an earlier date, seems to have been anxious to clear his mind before venturing to explore the mysterious nature of the Deity. We learn from Cicero (*De Finibus*, v. 29) that the Greek sage traversed Egypt in order to acquire knowledge concerning numbers and divine things from the "barbarian priests" (*sacerdotibus barbaris*. See Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, ch. xxi, p. 45).

shuffling morals. Ritual was not exalted above righteousness. There was no Pope whom the Holy Spirit guarded against theological error, while leaving his personal morals to take care of themselves. In such ancient Hindu treatises as "The Laws of Manu" (about 1000 B.C.), we find no suggestion that sacramentals and the application of holy water, or the perfunctory "absolution round the corner," are a sufficient expiation of sin. Man's ultimate destiny depended on character and conduct: without these things the telling of beads and the "rotatory turnings of the calabash" were of no avail whatever.

"Be it known unto all of you," say the old sacred books, "that none of you shall achieve absorption into the bosom of Brahma by prayer alone; and the mysterious monosyllable will not efface your latest defilement, except you reach the threshold of the future life laden with good works; and the most meritorious of these works will be those which are based upon the motives of charity and love for one's neighbour.

"One single good action is worth more than a thousand good thoughts. . . . Let the sage constantly observe the moral obligations (Yamas) more attentively than the religious duties (Niyamas), for he who neglects the moral duties is losing ground even if he observes his religious obligations." [1]

Piety for the sake of the future, right behaviour based on fear of the consequences to one's own skin, receive the condemnation that they deserve. If a man does a good deed, not because it is right, but to escape being boiled in oil hereafter, he achieves no merit: Plato, Dean Inge, and other sages follow the Indian in impressing this truth upon us. Love and justice to one's neighbour are inculcated by Indian ethic, just as they are by the Sermon on the Mount; evil must be requited with good, the other cheek turned to the smiter. So the virtuous man, inaccessible to any desire of the senses, meditating with joy upon the Supreme Being, will be allowed to "dwell in the forest" on earth, and will assure himself of the happiest fate hereafter, that of being absorbed into the bosom of Brahma.

[1] *The Great Secret*, by M. Maeterlinck, p. 87 sq. *The Spectator* (December 30, 1922) speaks of "the highest reaches of Buddhist thought" as being hitherto "perhaps the most exalted of mental achievement."

CHAPTER IV

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECT

Psychology is the popular science of our time, and mysticism has long been its happy hunting-ground. It largely dominates philosophy, which has to accommodate itself to the fashions of the hour, and its raids into the territory of religion become ever more frequent and daring. Christianity is now being explained in terms of psychological theory, and the latter joins hands with certain divines in the attempt to depress humanity in the cosmic scale. Our standardizing of values and measures and morals would appear to be all a mistake. Augustinian theology told us we were worms, and some of the latest scientific theories make us out wormier than ever: we are literally between the devil and the deep sea. According to the Church, man is a miserable creature whom grace alone can save; he may be perfectly charming and virtuous, but that will not help him. He is dominated from his birth by a malevolent Satan, and is consequently liable, however good he may be, to suffer horrible torment in the next world. Messrs. Freud and Co. are the Augustinians of mental science. For original sin they substitute various unpleasant complexes, and a subconscious self which is little better than a moral cesspool. Here the evil impulses of the mind spawn and gradually get men completely in their power; the human *libido* is introduced as a sort of psycho-analytic Satan. The human lot is altogether a very hard one, and it is much to our credit that we manage to maintain so cheerful a demeanour under such distressing circumstances.

To leave out psycho-analysis in a discussion of mystical phenomena and their causes is in these days impossible, but I must frankly disclaim any expert knowledge or other special

qualifications. I have not graduated in the *haute école* of the new science. I am only a novice awaiting initiation into these esoteric mysteries: my tortured brain is still trying to cope with their impressive but slightly grotesque terminology. The "mumpsimus" of one school is quite as satisfactory to me as the "sumpsimus" of another. My views (if I had any) as to the alleged attractive power of subjectivity in the region of the lumbar ganglion would probably not be worth printing. Nor, on the other hand, have those torrential "uprushings from the subliminal self," which are said to inspire certain mystics, hitherto been my portion. But I am deeply interested in, and am seeking a satisfactory solution of, such vital problems as the following. Is the mystic a divinely inspired being who deserves our reverence, or merely an unfortunate person "not in full use of his intellectuals," a pathological product of unsavoury complexes and the all-devouring *libido*? Is my personality regulated purely by hormones and the ductless glands, or have astrological influences any say in the matter? Was St. Paul's vision on the road to Damascus "objective," or must we follow the learned Dr. Jung and say that he was a victim to "psychogenic fits," and suffering from "a return of the old Saul-complex"?[1] When, and in what cases, are we to diagnose beatific vision, when indigestion affecting the solar plexus? When the pious author of *Gritos del Purgatorio* (Screams from Purgatory, and how to Mitigate them) saw souls in a furnace with their eyes torn out, molten metal up to their necks, and yelling with pain as imps pinched and stabbed them, was it a true foretaste of the sinner's doom, or had the refectory carp been unusually indigestible that evening, and the punch a trifle over-heady? Or again, was there some unconscious complex in him, some dormant vision in his own mind coloured by the horrible theological literature he had been reading, which suddenly "irrupted into consciousness" as the result of its own development?

I mention these things to indicate the difficulty of the subject, and the stern necessity of avoiding hasty judgments.

[1] See *An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, by R. H. Thouless, p. 190.

When saints and psycho-analysts disagree, who shall decide the issues between them? Whether we like it or not, the phenomena of religion are now definitely installed as a department of psychology, which makes the investigation of the religious consciousness, the origin and truth and value of our religious beliefs and prepossessions, its special study. Christian people naturally do not relish this lowering (as they deem it) of faith to the level of secular activities of the mind: with mystics *Gefühl ist alles*; spiritual emotion overpowers reflective analysis. Modern thought, on the other hand, wants to probe further into these matters. It challenges orthodoxy, and severely tests the value of religious emotion as evidence for the truth of religion. It questions the objective validity of "experience," and suggests that the Pegasus the mystic is bestriding is only a rocking-horse. Psychology maintains that every one of our states of mind has some organic process as its suggestion and environment; it is argued that where mysticism postulates Divinity as a full explanation of experience, we should with greater reason postulate the unconscious. Visions and intuitions are real enough, it is said, but they have only a subjective reality: empirical methods can never give us any absolute certainty. Neither can "authority" afford us proof, and between them the dogmatic position is reduced to an absurdity: we have at best nothing more than a certain measure of probability to go upon. Abnormal states of mind can, as we know, be artificially cultivated; and one writer maintains that "there is no vital difference between unhealthy solitary brooding on a given subject and drugging the mind with hashish."[1] Nitrous oxide, ether, opium, soma, belladonna, peyote (cactus), and other drugs induce great mental exaltation, and epileptic fits are said to be accompanied sometimes by ecstatic visions which a saint might envy. J. A. Symonds imagined that he had experienced God while under the influence of an anæsthetic, and was horrified to find that he had been tricked by his abnormally excited brain. Another writer, however, makes "Anæsthetic Revelation" the clue to the meaning of Existence, and the moral sustenance

[1] *Religion and Sex*, by C. Cohen, p. 58.

of his life.[1] The Mohammedan Sufis of Persia put their trust in wine, and some people in our day rely on cocaine or old Scotch whisky as efficacious aids to ecstasy. Once more, how are we to distinguish the purely pathological state from mystical exaltation, counterfeit frenzy and exaltation from the rapture which is said to be "a purely supernatural infusion?" Psychical phenomena and visions are an essentially personalist affair; nobody can share directly his neighbour's personal experience.

Another argument for the subjective view may be drawn from the incontestable fact that mystical experience is influenced by social environment, by suggestions due to time, place, and fashion. It is coloured by the mystic's psychology, by the ideas of the age in which he lives, and the beliefs prevailing among the community to which he belongs. Suggestion, auto-suggestion, hetero-suggestion, and the rest of it, all play their part in producing his visions. He assimilates through a species of mental contagion. "There are no experiences," says the Rev. Rufus Jones,[2] "of any sort which are independent of preformed expectations or unaffected by the prevailing beliefs of the time." "Our highest intuitions of the divine," writes Dean Inge, "our most intimate communications with God, must still be relative to the condition in which we are."[3] There is also a continuous chain of mysticism, we are told, a kind of mystical procession and "emotion of the sublime" through the ages, by which each visionary absorbs and utilizes the experience of his predecessors and hands on the results to those who come after him. This, again, militates against the notion that visionary experience is of an objective character. Each Ego invests its own notions and its own will with a divine authority; it creates its own facts after its own fashion, and for itself.

It is often urged, and with perfect truth, that certain mystics, like St. Bernard, St. Teresa, and the German Tauler, were exceedingly energetic, cheerful, and capable persons; the

[1] See *An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, by R. Thouless, p. 61.
[2] *Studies in Mystical Religion*, p. xxxiv.
[3] *Outspoken Essays*, Second Series, p. 16.

Jekyll of practical efficiency coexisted with the Hyde of occasional ecstasy and torpor; but a much larger number appear to have been, like our Idle Rich, worshipful in proportion to their uselessness. And, in the case of the active ones, their mysticism was usually a by-product of their lives rather than a controlling interest. Their periods of pure contemplation, we are told, seldom lasted more than half-an-hour; when they left speculation and became practical they ceased to be mystics. St. Teresa's deeper experiences did not begin till middle age, and were always rare and intermittent. Her visions, moreover, were carefully supervised by a confessor or "director," and where his directions clashed with Holy Writ, God told her to follow the director. She was haunted by doubts whether she ever really saw the visions at all, and during the last twenty years of her life she saw them no more. In like manner, the cloistered contemplation of St. Bernard was a thing apart from his active labours in the world outside. He had no wonderful visions of his own: his great aim, his crowning work, was the establishment, on a practical basis, of monasticism and the contemplative life.

Human nature is a complex thing defying classification; exceptional personalities often combine the most diverse and opposite characteristics. In the religious world of to-day we find certain adherents of mystical sects who unite intense contemplational devotion with a marvellously keen eye for the main chance. Some of them are too holy to fight, and were content to remain at home during the War and to make money out of their conscientious shirking, while their less pious neighbours were dying in the trenches for the country—and for them. These Calvins of commerce are also prophets of Disinterested Love, forgetting that love ceases to be love when it becomes commercialised. On Sundays they bid us, like other good Quietists, to "lay our deadly doing down," but on weekdays they work harder and more efficiently than most people, and often amass considerable fortunes. Indeed, their acquisitiveness amounts almost to intemperance. They know quite as much about the fluctuations of terrestrial markets as they do about the kingdom of heaven. They are supposed to love

their neighbours more than themselves, and are apt to identify their private interests with those of God; but, if their professions of super-morality were consistent, they would not resist the swindler any more than they resist the man-at-arms: they would willingly allow either to take the wealth they have accumulated in trade.

In sharp contrast with these sagacious pietists, we find throughout history a large body of mystics who display an astonishing ignorance and a fatuousness that approaches imbecility; and these, curiously enough, are regarded as the characteristics which furnish the true mark of inspiration. God, says Plato in the *Timæus* (71–2), has given the art of divination, not to wisdom, but to the foolishness of man. "No man, when in his wits, attains prophetic truth and inspiration." The more intellectual visionaries may rationalize their experiences, but the majority do the reverse. Their writings are very often, but by no means always, vapid twaddle; the images they employ are trite and commonplace, when they are not coarsely erotic. Catholic authors quoted by Dean Inge say rightly that "la plupart des contemplatifs étaient dépourvus de toute culture littéraire." St. Teresa had not much intellect, and she confesses that such understanding as she possessed was found to be rather in the way than otherwise.[1] All sorts of people see visions, heavenly and otherwise. Indeed, it is contended that these visions "do not possess any real value unless it can be proved that they are experienced by mystics who are truly and absolutely illiterate."[2] The rule of admission into the ancient Church was, according to Celsus, "Let no educated man enter, no wise man, no prudent man, for such things we deem evil." Only the ignorant and unintelligent were welcome.[3] In Swedenborg's *Correspondence*, where all the terms and objects in the natural and spiritual worlds are catalogued in pairs, the ass is made to correspond to scientific truth; and certain "heavy-handed dogmatists" of the Churches would almost

[1] *Vida*, p. 83. See Vaughan's *Hours with the Mystics*, ii. 156.
[2] Maeterlinck's *Great Secret*, p. 210.
[3] Legge's *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, p. lviii.

appear to have adopted this classification. It is recorded that Balaam's she-ass saw the apparition of the angel to which the prophet's eyes were blind; and she did so although—nay rather, if Whistler's critic is to be believed, *because*—she was an ass.

These tendencies of debased mysticism did not escape the Church's eyes, and the "director," or spiritual guide, was introduced to enforce on feeble and indolent natures subserviency to the ecclesiastical will. Everything that weakened men's reasoning faculties and developed the infantile side of human nature increased her authority, and brought money to her coffers. Mr. Thouless points out in chapter xii of his book the grave danger that attends certain methods of psycho-analysis which produce similar results. Auto-suggestion, for example, is an essentially infantile mode of behaviour, and the "infantile psyche" should be repressed rather than purposely developed. "Clearly, the abandonment of effort is a dangerous formula if it is taken as a complete guide to life."

The mystics of former days had special faculties for diagnosing psychical diseases, which our psycho-analysts (at least, so far as I am aware) do not possess. Their senses, especially the sense of smell, were abnormally developed. Some of the saints were spiritual pointers: if evil spirits were about, they scented them as a dog scents partridges. Their noses could detect the odour of sanctity (an actual physical fragrance, as Catholics still tell us) no less than the stench of concealed sin. "The soul without prayer," says St. Chrysostom, "is dead and emits an offensive odour (*graviter olens*)." [1] The olfactory nerves of St. Philip Neri were so acute that he often had to hold his nose while confessing very wicked people. On the other hand, as Vaughan reminds us, a delicious bouquet arose from the remains of disinterred saints.

The origin of religious emotion and belief must always be an important subject in the psychological study of religion, and it has given rise to much theorizing of a quasi-scientific nature. Certain gentlemen, bearing the imposing name of "erotogenesists," tell us that the sexual and religious instincts are

[1] *The Necessity of Prayer*, by St. Alphonsus Liguori, p. 6.

united at their source, and really one and the same thing. All religion, they maintain, is simply a misinterpretation of sex-feeling: we think we are pious when, as a matter of fact, we are only love-sick. Renan classed the innate religious instinct of women in the same category with the sexual instinct, and he seems to have a considerable backing of scientific opinion. "If there were no sex there would be no theology," says Mr. George Moore in *Salve*; and Mr. Moore is a great admirer of the ladies as well as a competent theologian. Everything is to be materialized: the chuckle of the psycho-analyst, as Emerson might say if he were with us now, makes orthodoxy hang its head, and puts all divinity to rout. But, unfortunately, these simple theories fail to cover the whole of what is a very complex problem. That much of what passes for religious sentiment is intimately connected with the sex instinct, that there is a close correspondence between the two, and that sex is often a determining factor in shaping the lives of saintly people, is fairly obvious. Being a naturally cautious person, I hesitate before committing myself to any particular theory. Far be it from me to suggest that the religious life is nothing more than "an irradiation of the reproductive instinct"; but I think we may associate ourselves with Mr. Thouless' observation that the sex instinct is part of the instinctive foundation of religion, though not the whole of it. I further affirm, without the slightest hesitation, that dogmatic religion exploits erotic passion in a manner, and to an extent, that is positively shameless. The luscious exuberance of Roman Catholic imagery in treating of these matters, which strongly suggests thinly masked sensuality, will be dealt with later on.

The phenomena of conversion, particularly the conversion of young people, offer another problem which is the source of endless argument between religious people and psychologists. I think it may fairly be said that religious experience is now proved to be subject to the same influences that govern other emotional manifestations: its workings correspond with the workings of normal psychological law. Non-religious people view sudden conversion with the suspicion that naturally attaches to any rapid or violent change that occurs in any man's

life or character or opinions, and even religious people agree that we should distrust visions and other mental phenomena which, as they seem to have had no period of development in the mind, may be hysteria counterfeiting the mystical condition. Conversion may be due to a variety of causes. There is conversion by soup-tickets to paupers, or social entertainment lavished on more educated folk, or bribes of a similar kind to the savage or civilized conscience; and Professor Starbuck considers—rightly, in my opinion—that snobbish and other worldly considerations are the most compelling factor in the case. As regards youthful conversion Professor William James, quoted by Mr. Cohen in chapter vii of his *Religion and Sex*, says that " conversion is in its essence a normal adolescent phenomenon, incidental to the passage from the child's small universe to the wider intellectual and spiritual life of maturity." Professor Starbuck and Dr. Stanley Hall give confirmatory evidence. Other writers go further, and, arguing from the undoubted fact that conversions are most numerous at, or about, the age of puberty, assert that they have their whole origin in the sexual impulse. Mr. Cohen maintains that amongst uncivilized peoples it is not only sex, but sex as a supernatural manifestation, which is the vital feature of the situation, and that " by the great majority of theologians there is assumed a direct supernatural influence in the states of mind developed during adolescence."

This period with its perfectly normal manifestations, its inarticulate cravings, and strong emotional dispositions, deserves special attention. Their true significance is, as we are told, the entry of the individual into the larger life of the race; but they are continually used by religious instructors of youth and directed by them in the interest of the organizations they serve. All periods of sudden or rapid development involve some upsetting of mental stability, and it is at the adolescent period that the sexual and religious instincts seem to coalesce. Eminent headmasters tell us that " most boys of the public school age have a strongly mystical tendency," and that a large proportion of boys and girls " go a little mad " between the ages of fourteen and seventeen. Of course they do; and

parents should be on their guard against the use which priest-craft makes of the longings and processes of puberty, with a view to persuading young and immature people that they have a " vocation " for the religious life.

Let us also, on the other hand, remember that psychology, regarded as a science, is still in its infancy, and that there are quacks dabbling in it who are a danger to the community. The present state of psycho-analytic theory is considered by first-class authorities to be very unsatisfactory.[1] Uninstructed persons should beware of hasty conclusions, atavistic methods, and rash experiment outrunning knowledge, and put a check on that lay and clerical enthusiasm which would play tricks with our children's brains. It seems a pity to focus attention on the lower and meaner elements in human nature, and to tell young people that these are the things which dominate their personality. Why proceed on the assumption that a child's mind, or that of a young girl, is a sink of corruption that needs to be cleaned out periodically by a process of nasty interrogation ? Why this horrible belief that sin is present everywhere, " that a little girl's heart is a mass of festering sores, poisoned by envy, malice, and self-will " ; that it is the duty of a Christian priest to make " a steady search through all the windings of a childish brain, after those hidden roots of evil, which else might some day bear their bitter fruit ? " [2] Every day makes it clearer that some people, both lay and clerical, have sex on the brain ; and in the next chapter I propose to show that there are other ingredients in the mystical or religious cauldron besides the erotic instinct, and the most important of these, I think, is fear.

[1] See an instructive article in *The Times Literary Supplement* for February 14, 1924.

[2] *François de Fénelon*, by Lord St. Cyres, p. 57.

CHAPTER V

THE INGREDIENT OF TERROR

It was fear, Statius tells us in a notable passage, that was the original creator of the gods; and Lucretius, Persius, Plutarch, Hobbes, and other writers describe it as the real source, the "naturall seed" of mystical religion. The Greeks, as Miss Jane Harrison says in her admirable work, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, had an expressive word for their religion; they called it δεισιδαιμονία, fear (as opposed to worship) of spirits. Plutarch especially had an instinctive horror of this superstition. He revolted from its "unmeaning folly," hated the cruelty which is its inevitable accompaniment, and denounced it as a species of cowardice. Superstitious people, he said, are men made miserable by terror: they thought evil of the gods, feared them as harsh and cruel, yet flew to them for refuge, flattered yet reviled them, invoked their aid and then abused them when things went wrong. The beings they worshipped were irrational and mainly malevolent dæmons, who had to be "squared" somehow, and they entered into the presence of the god as though they were approaching the hole of a snake or the lair of a sea-monster.

To the pious Hebrew of ancient times the fear of the Lord was the beginning of wisdom, and he butchered large numbers of inoffensive animals in the hope of saving himself from the wrath of offended Deity. Terrorism was his idea, and—like Tertullian in later days—he looked forward to the time when God's chosen people should see their enemies frizzling in Gehenna, and rejoice and give thanks to the Creator. Among more primitive peoples the idea of sacrifice was no less in vogue, and the main object of life was, from prudential motives, the placating and propitiating of evil spirits by frequent shedding of blood. "The feare of things invisible" is still the predominant

element in their religious sentiment; they see the action of dæmonic beings in every natural phenomenon. To the North American Indian "the turning of a leaf, the crawling of an insect, the cry of a bird, the cracking of a bough, might be the mystic signal of weal or woe."[1] The priesthoods of every age and clime have exploited to the full man's dread of the supernatural, to their own gain and the great detriment of their flocks. They invented what we may venture to term the cataclysmal aspect of religion. Living in the world was like sitting on a powder-magazine: the universe might be sent to kingdom come any day, and its denizens naturally regarded its Creator pretty much as we regard an anarchist with a powerful bomb. Cultivated people in our day find it difficult to realize what it means to live in the shadow of these supernatural nightmares.

Mystery is the child of wonder and also of ignorance, and itself becomes the parent of terror, which in its turn begets a whole progeny of ferocious instincts. Especially would this seem to be so in respect of the madness and malignity induced by dread of the unseen world: the terror-stricken man or animal is apt to behave like a wild beast. "Fear is cruel and mean," says Emerson; and the point I desire to emphasize is that superstitious dread, whether ingrained or artificially induced, is commonly found to have cruelty as its inseparable accompaniment. To illustrate its meanness we have only to recall one of the recent eruptions of Mount Etna—which, according to the Scholastics, are the result of Hell getting overcrowded. The volcano bursts into flame, and the panic-stricken peasants break each other's heads in a mad struggle to obtain possession of the local Saint's staff, which alone can avert the impending doom. Each man fights for his own hand: his neighbour may be engulfed in the lava-flood for all he cares, if only he can secure the treasure which mystical and religious superstition assures him is his best protection. Religion based upon terror is a deadly agent of human demoralization: mysticism of the inferior order, Christian and

[1] "Pre-Animism," by Edward Clodd, quoting Parkman's *Jesuits in North America*.

heathen alike, has had its blood-baths of savagery, its "baboonery" no less gory than that of the Bolsheviks. Redemption, political and transcendental, is unobtainable unless somebody or something is massacred. Oceans of blood, rivers of tears, have been shed owing to the codes of sacrifice set up by the priesthoods of ultra-dogmatic piety; and a colossal tribute, paid in human suffering, has been exacted by the fanaticism which is mistakenly called faith, and on behalf of rites which are an affront to ordinary intelligence. Ancient Egypt, Greece, India, the Far East, Mexico, modern Rome—all have the same tale to tell of religious or quasi-religious butchery and mutilation.

The subject is not a pleasant one, so we will content ourselves with two examples only of mystical religion of the gory type, one Pagan, the other Christian. The first shall be the religion of ancient Mexico, which possessed a strong mystical quality coupled with an insatiable appetite for blood. Let me begin by pointing out that, as Mr. J. M. Robertson says in his *Pagan Christs*, part iv, the Mexican religion was by no means entirely barbarous. Its frightful system of sacrifice, which demanded frequent holocausts of victims, was bound up with a strict and ascetic sexual morality and an emphatic humanitarian doctrine. As in the Roman Church, saints were many, if sins were not few. A celibate priesthood educated the children to be peaceful and to bear injuries with meekness, while men were exhorted to feed the poor and to recognize that adultery could be committed by the eyes and heart. Confession and absolution were practised; they had sacraments resembling ours, which were connected with the symbol (said to be pre-Christian) of a cross known as "the Tree of our life."[1]

Yet this celebrated system of religion was stained by a barbarity almost beyond belief. Like many savages, and certain people who are not usually reckoned as savages, the Mexicans argued that divine favours would be distributed in ratio to the amount of gore shed sacrificially. The gods were athirst, and, unless they had lots of blood, they would

[1] *Pagan Christs*, p. 368.

perish of inanition and be unable to do their work for the benefit of mankind. The Spanish monks computed that from 30,000 to 50,000 human victims were sacrificed to the divinities every year. It is said that 70,000 were slain at the dedication of the temple to the God Huitzilopochtli, whose virgin-mother, Coatlicue, bore him after being impregnated with a ball of bright-coloured feathers. Anybody who cares to read the revolting details can find them in Mr. Robertson's book and the works of the numerous authors he cites. At one such "festival" the priests piously improved the occasion with edifying sermons, while the aristocratic congregation "sacramentally ate the victim's roasted limbs." [1] It is a dismal chronicle, and the atmosphere of the shambles, which has always hung around religion of this type, is by no means dissipated yet.

A hardly less gruesome record of horrors is presented to us by the history of Latin Christianity, and the point we have to remember is that all these nightmare abominations find abundant justification in her theology. Terrorism, in this world and the next, has always been the mainstay of her dominion: she learned from the Gnostics the pecuniary and authoritative value of Hell and its frightfulness.[2] According to Robert Burns,

> The fear o' hell's a hangman's whip
> To haud the wretch in order;

but the trouble is, as I have more than once shown elsewhere, that the fear of hell does *not* keep the Papist "wretch" in order. A study of criminal statistics, official and other reports from all quarters of the globe, shows that Roman Catholics are, roughly, three or four times as disorderly and criminal as non-Catholics. The Papacy, as the Catholic Lord Acton said,[3] has made assassination "a law of the Christian Church and

[1] I was looking the other day at a picture, in the *Illustrated London News*, of Nebuchadnezzar's altar in Ur of the Chaldees; and the size of the drain for carrying off the victims' blood suggested unpleasant reflections.

[2] See *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, by F. Legge, ii. 201.

[3] *Selections from the Correspondence of the First Lord Acton*, vol. i, p. 55.

a condition of salvation"; and consequently, as Cardinal Vaughan candidly informed us, "the Church has never spared the knife" to cut off her enemies. God, in Roman theory, tortures His creatures in order that they may love Him the more. Not even the poor little unbaptized infant escapes the universal condemnation: the mother's anguish at the loss of her new-born babe is enhanced by the fear of what it may be suffering at the hands of an "almighty and most merciful Father." And the torments of the righteous and innocent, be it observed, are described by the highest authorities as being identical with the fire of Hell: "Holy Souls" suffer as much as bad ones. "The damned are tormented," says St. Thomas Aquinas, "and the elect purified in the same fire." "Their pains are immense." "The fire that tortures them," says St. Augustine, "is more excruciating than any pain that man can endure in this life."[1] St. Chrysostom, St. Cyril, and others corroborate. All the earthly sorrows, says St. Cyril, that man can endure till the Judgment Day are better than suffering for one day the least pain of Purgatory. And the Holy Souls, while enduring all this agony, "are so poor that they have no means of making satisfaction." They are "inferior to us," while being purified by pain, St. Thomas says, and are entirely helpless "until they have satisfied the justice of God." After that we have a eulogy of God's "clemency," and Liguori assures us that He "is infinitely more merciful" than the Saints.

As we read these dreadful words we recall Plutarch's strictures, which I quoted just now, on the men who thought evil of the gods, feared them as harsh and cruel, and depicted them as irrational and malevolent demons. What Emerson terms "the unjust 'justice' of the Eternal Father" seems to us incredible. God becomes a sort of celestial Inquisitor, a magnified Bishop of the Church's persecuting era; and

[1] *The Necessity of Prayer*, by St. Alphonsus Liguori, pp. 16, 18, 20, 25. I bought this work in Westminster Cathedral on August 2 (Liguori's day), 1923; so we may assume that it represents orthodox teaching current to-day. St. Alphonsus, as my readers know, is Rome's accredited exponent of ethical doctrine. The *Catholic Encyclopædia* (1910) tells us that he "said nothing in his *Moral Theology* which is not the common teaching of Catholic theologians."

we wonder how it is that so depressing a creed has so many devoted adherents. We wonder, too, how it is possible for any human being to be brought up in such teaching, and to escape being brutalized. What is there in it, we ask, that kindly folk like our Anglo-Catholics find so fascinating? The ferocity of ecclesiastics, the bloodthirstiness displayed by Irish and other Papists, become more comprehensible. The Church's official theology teems with incentives to cruelty (see the *National Review* for August and October 1922, and July 1923). Even so gentle and kindly a man as Cardinal Newman held the damnable doctrine of exclusive salvation, and thought that heresiarchs should be slain like wild beasts. He also justified the Inquisition; and Mr. G. K. Chesterton—likewise a very amiable person, though Dean Inge says that he has "devoted his life to crucifying the truth head-downwards"—follows suit. He excuses the early Inquisition, which he regards as "a sort of martial law," and says it was anyhow better than mob-law. Mr. H. Belloc, who as a *Times* reviewer observes, "possesses wit and ferocity," also has that robust faith in strong measures which characterizes the true believer. He thinks that "the Catholic Church is never seen to greater advantage than when she wields the sword." My fancy depicts that sturdy and versatile author, a sort of twentieth-century Torquemada in the vanguard of the Papist host, having exchanged the fountain-pen for the battle-axe, hacking and hewing down heretics along with the best of them, and cracking ferocious jokes as he slays.

Two apt illustrations of mystical ferocity, exhibiting itself in a nation's psychology, come readily to our minds. Among the two most "Christian" peoples of Europe (as Lord Morley sarcastically observed), the Irish and the Russians, what President Cosgrave calls "Bedlam out of bounds" has lately been having its fling. They have respectively been tearing one another to pieces in the name of culture, humanity, patriotism, and religion, thus giving some grounds for the theory that mystical vision is a symptom of incipient mental disease.

[1] Ward's *Life of Newman*, i. 640; Acton's *History of Freedom*, 443.

Both peoples have been reared in an artificial atmosphere of cunningly stimulated dread of the unseen. As might have been expected, this dread, primitive in origin, has been productive of primitive savagery. The reactions of mysticism on unbalanced minds are illustrated most abundantly, perhaps, by the Russian peasantry and townspeople. "The Russian," says M. Paléologue in *An Ambassador's Memoirs*, "has no real interest in anything save the supernatural and invisible"; he cares for nothing but "fleeting horizons, nebulous and vague perspectives." He may, I think, be regarded as representing the mystical type *par excellence*. He is naturally religious, but the picture which eminent Russian authors draw of his religion is not an attractive one; some maintain that the mysticism of the people has been their ruin. "Conversions," according to a Russian professor of divinity, and rigorous asceticisms are swiftly succeeded by horrible vice and cruelty. Abnormal "holiness" alternates with bestiality approaching Sadism. "A man," says Dostoievsky, "with a heart above the ordinary, and a superior mind, begins by setting up a Madonna as his ideal and ends by descending to the depths of Sodom"; and all the time he is "finding a place in his heart for the vision of the Madonna, and is really and truly burning for her." [1]

I have always maintained that it is a great mistake to suppose that the deeds which have stained civilization and blackened the face of Russia were alien to the spirit of the people; and abundant confirmation of this view has since come to hand. Lenin and Trotsky have been able to maintain their power because they had the support of a large majority: their régime was never really hateful to the mass of the people. The peasants cared not a jot about atrocities so long as they could get possession of the land. "Peace and happiness to the much-suffering, Christian-like soul of Lenin," was the eulogy passed by the Bolshevik Metropolitan, Head of the Russian Orthodox Church, on that brooding, blood-stained visionary; and in the biographies of the great revolutionary his barbarities are scarcely mentioned. Before the War clever

[1] *The Times*, November 26, 1919.

people in England and Western Europe worshipped the Russians as profound philosophers, mystical saints and reformers. To them Muscovy was a beacon-light, the rightful leader of the civilization that was to be. Did not Tolstoi and Dostoievsky tell them that "the Christian understanding of life manifests itself among the Russian people in a way peculiar to them alone," that Europe was on the eve of ruin, but that Russia was the country of men who were "prophets of the age and universe," and would "reveal to the world her own Russian Christ"? Soulful young ladies in England took them at their own valuation, and rhapsodized over the profound mystical significance of the epileptic novelists and playwrights who, though they may have been "tortured cripples with a maddening sensibility," had at any rate such beautifully picturesque names.

Our *Intelligentsia*, too, was busy discovering spiritual affinities between Slavdom and itself. Mysticism was the attraction: Russians were mystics, and must therefore be gentle, good, and charming. They idolized altruism, we were assured, and possessed the "spirit of meekness and holiness and humanity": they "treat all men with freedom, tolerance, and understanding."[1] I could fill a volume with the compliments showered on the meek and amiable Slav by first-rate English authors. Russia had burst into our presence as "an inspired child with undazzled vision, and trailing clouds of glory"; her spiritual leadership "came like a fresh wind from the sea"; our morality "is but a faded morality compared with Russian," and "a veritable cataclysm awaits us" if we do not alter "the immoral structure" of our social order in accordance with theirs. Lastly, it is interesting to learn that Russians "live by enunciating absolute truths"—and I take it we may expect to be knouted severely if we do not accept them.

Now all is changed. We see the Russians as they are, and as they always have been; and we have no particular desire to follow in the footsteps of a people who have lately been drawn to the life by one of their leading revolutionaries. Maxim

[1] See an article in the *Fortnightly Review* for October 1917.

Gorki, in a recent work, paints the Russian peasant—the idyllic countryman who "hardly ever goes to hell," of Tolstoi's imagination—"in the darkest colours, as a monster of primitively cunning brutality." [1] His outstanding quality, we learn, is "a sense of special cruelty," which has about it a "diabolical sharpness." Women and children are pitilessly beaten, because "Russians like beating generally, and it is all the same whom they beat." The more people there are killed or starved, the better—"more room for the rest," says the peasant: "men are cheap." "What a lot of free land we shall have!" when the weak and worn-out have perished. "We must wipe out all educated people from the face of the earth; then it will be easier for us fools (the country-folk) to live." To sum up, Gorki describes the Russians as a community of semi-civilized folk, and concludes with the remark, "The cruel form of the revolution I explain by the exceptional brutality of the Russian people." Still, he has hopes for the future. He suggests that "the monsters described above" may die out, and that their places may be taken by a new race. But he does not "think this will be a very gentle or kind people"; they will be active and suspicious, and indifferent to everything but their own direct needs.

Turning to Ireland, we find another race with a double strain of rather inferior mysticism, and definite religious qualities of a sort. There is, first, the old folklore and Nature-mysticism inherited from their Druid ancestors, and still deeply implanted in the peasant mind; and this runs side by side with the incongruous blend of dogma and mysticism introduced by Latin Christianity; the unshackled mythology and sorcery of Paganism blend with the formalistic wizardry instituted by Rome. In this sense, the Irishman may be said to have a double dose of original sin. It seems tolerably clear that the Druids possessed a mystical religion and philosophy of their own which was of a fairly high order.[2] To this was added, later on, the learning of the early Christian immigrants, who, as the Druids feared would happen, gradually dispossessed

[1] See review in *The Times* of October 7, 1922.

[2] See the *National Review*, July 1923.

the old Gaelic hierarchy.[1] The Irish schools became by degrees a centre of erudition, and their scholars issued forth to lighten the darkness of Britain and Europe. The great mystic and Neo-Platonist philosopher, Erigena, or John the Scot, who translated "Dionysius" into Latin, came to Scotland from Ireland; and he is said to have obtained his early training in Irish schools. The Druid view about religion was, "There ought to be no contention concerning gods: it were as senseless as contention about souls." But dogmatic religion came spending its time and energies in contention about gods, and succeeded in turning social and civic life into the sectarian bear-garden which still defaces civilization in general, and Ireland in particular.

Five centuries ago Panderus recorded how St. Brigit, Erin's favourite female saint, was told by her guardian angel that Ireland had more souls damned than any other Christian country. They fell down into hell thick as hail showers, because of "continual war, root of hate and envy, and vices contrary to charity."[2] "Unauthorized murders" and outrages committed by the laity, the preaching of hatred and strife by the clerics, seem to have troubled the angel more than they disturb the equanimity of Erin's hierarchy and other "pachydermatous prelates" of our day.

In Ireland politico-clerical terrorism has deprived the mystical peasant of mind and individuality, made his thoughts a mere echo of another man's thoughts, his will subject to that man's will, and caused the shadow of a great perturbation to hang like a thundercloud over his whole life. He is for ever quaking, like the bogs of his native land. He cowers before the Church; trembles at the idea of Hell and Purgatory, at the ghosts which his goblin-obsessed, priest-ridden brain makes him see in the gathering shades of night; at the public opinion

[1] Professor J. B. Bury, in his *Life of St. Patrick*, p. 79, cites a queer old Druid prophecy of the Christian invasion: "Adze-head will come with a crook-head staff; in his house, with hole-head robe, he will chant impiety from his table . . . and all his household will respond, 'So be it, so be it.'"

[2] *The Spectator*, September 9, 1922; the *Times Literary Supplement*, July 19, 1923.

which is (or at any rate used to be) the opinion of the village *curé*; at the danger of maltreatment or assassination during the early morning hours—at everything in heaven above or the earth beneath. Nothing can be more deplorable than the meanness, the narrowness, and the inconceivable pettiness of a life lived out in clerical leading-strings. "A lordly magnificence of wickedness," says A. E., "is not so hopeless a thing to contemplate as a dead level of petty iniquity"; and the remark was inspired by the conditions of Irish life before the present reign of lordly magnificence in iniquity had begun.

The inherited instincts and training of the Irishman are now bearing their full fruit. His favourite hero is the gunman, and he screens murderers from justice. He kills and maims for the most trivial reasons, or for no reason at all; and the Latin Church, by her teaching and example, has directly encouraged these homicidal tendencies. "An Ultramontane clergy," says Lord Acton, "is not proof against the sophistry by which men justify murder or excuse murderers. The assassin is only a little more resolutely logical or a little bolder than the priest." Contempt for human life is fostered by a religion of blood. If the Papist's God acts—or is represented as acting—like a Fiend, why should not the Papist himself act in similar fashion? "You burn your enemies: God does the same,"[1] said the Jesuits to the Redskins whom they incited to scalp and torture the New England Puritans. So it has come about that the Irish Caliban, long chained to a lethargy of fatalism and ignorance, must now be left to reform himself: history shows that the priest is unequal to the task, and the outside world has neither the will nor the capacity to undertake it. Whenever you find a people, of any time or race or country, who are illiterate, gloomy, cruel, credulous, besotted, and inefficient—half dreamers, half savages—be sure that their training is at fault. No community can be better than the

[1] It should be noted that the Roman Catholic's God, more ferocious than the Redskin, burns friend as well as foe. Holy Souls are roasted "in the same fire" as the wicked (see p. 53).

individuals that compose it. As Emerson says in his Essay on Politics,

> Nor kind nor coinage buys
> Aught above its rate :
> Fear, Craft, and Avarice
> Cannot rear a State.

The men who would die for their Church, and deem it a mark of piety to kill for her, must be taught sounder doctrine. They should be educated to the point at which they can judge for themselves, and instructed—not how to die or how to kill—but how to live. For many centuries Latin traditionalism and Greek Orthodoxy have maintained a blockade of man's mental and moral faculties. This blockade has been shown by experience to be ethically useless and intellectually ruinous, and it is time it were raised. Better no religion or mysticism at all than a fetish that is at once false, obscurantist, and cruel. There are occasions, no doubt, when knowledge may be profitably withheld, but it has proved in the long run to be the best antidote to the poisons of the soul—including such disorders as homicidal mania induced by religious or political sentimentality.

CHAPTER VI

NATURE-MYSTICISM

THE religion of Nature is the oldest, and perhaps the most enduring, of all religions. "Nature is loved by what is best in us"; whatever our beliefs may be, we must all believe in the dark goddess, Earth, and the mysterious life-divinity whose name in Latin signifies the Being who is about to be born—and, moreover, to be continually re-born. Nature is our mother to whom we owe our existence, a benefactress, austere but kind, who provides us with all good things, but punishes us inexorably if we do not use her gifts rightly. As we look at her work, "we seem to catch a glance of a system in transition"; she is a farmer who turns her capital day by day, as Emerson tells us, and, "like a cautious testator, ties up her estate so as not to bestow it all on one generation."[1] One thing passes into another; all things are in a continual state of flux. We find little trace of *semper eadem* in her practice or her teaching, but an endless procession, a continual becoming: for this reason the tillers of the soil, who live at the heart of Nature, are commonly mystics and rustic philosophers. There is no end to the questions she asks us, or makes us ask; she is a perpetual educator, and beneath the mutability of her expressions there is always the sense of an underlying permanence.

Nature-mysticism originally sprang from primitive theorizing about the natural forces which affect mankind, and some scholars hold that the Nature-worship which was the outcome of this type of mysticism among the Aryan peoples formed the foundation of the three great world-religions,

[1] *Society and Solitude*, p. 286.

Brahmanism, Zoroastrianism, and Christianity. Even now we are only partially acquainted with the processes of Nature: we do not yet know, for instance, what is natural and what is supernatural, and the precise nature of a "miracle" has yet to be explained. Primitive man began by seeing "power everywhere—power vaguely apprehended but immanent, and as yet unclothed with supernatural or personal attributes"—a form of religion which may be called Naturism or Pre-Animism.[1] Later on, these impersonal elemental forces of Nature were clothed with personal qualities and regarded as possessing powers which were directed by unseen beings, usually to the detriment of mankind; the conception next arose of personal individual gods whose enmity had to be placated with gifts and sacrifice. Such beings could not inspire love, and Nature was regarded with dread. Life, for the aboriginal, was one long nightmare; the terrors of the unseen dogged his footsteps and disturbed his dreams. He knew he could not cope with these irresistible forces, and the sense of his helplessness overwhelned him. Pondering over these things, ancient theosophists made a considerable advance on primitive theory. They considered the world to be a huge animal united throughout its organism by secret sympathies, and they believed that the pious man of virtuous life might hold intercourse with it and fathom its mysteries. And to the virtues of holiness they would add knowledge: they dreamed of a day when mystical science, inspired from above and aided by benign celestial agencies, would be able to repel the malignant powers that were for ever conspiring against the peace of mankind. But in the ancient world (with the possible exception of Greece in the heyday of her prosperity) and in the Dark and Middle Ages—that golden era of dirt, bacteria, ignorance, and crime—the element of fear long predominated over that of love in man's conception of the universe, and he had a very limited admiration for its processes and phenomena. He could not, as a rule, take an optimistic view of an external world that was the scene of so much cruelty and suffering. The unseen powers that directed it certainly did not inspire

[1] "Pre-Animism," by E. Clodd, *R.P.A. Annual* for 1917.

him with affection, because Nature was evidently no saint and the evil in her appeared to him greatly to outweigh the good.

On the other hand, there were certain men more spiritually-minded, who recognized the beauty and harmony of the universe, but dared not dwell upon its perfections lest they should divert their souls from the contemplation of God. They did not need to seek God's footprints in Nature, they said, but preferred to find Him in the depths of their own souls. St. Augustine was one of the many mystics who deprecated an emotional attitude towards Nature, though he recognized in her an expression of the divine. Nor had the glories of the external world any charm for the beautiful, yet austere, mind of Pascal. "The eternal silence of these infinite spaces" greatly terrified him, and inspired him with many poignant thoughts which he expressed in his own inimitable prose. He was a sick man when he wrote his *Pensées*. For him, as for every Jansenist, Nature—like man, and indeed all creation—was under a curse; the whole world presented itself to his suffering soul as a series of black cliffs threatening to topple over and crush him, fathomless abysses into which he fancied himself to be falling.[1] We more fortunate moderns, less weighed down by the bogies of Augustinian theology which oppressed the great champion of Port Royal, are enabled to view the workings of Nature with greater complacency.

As time went on, out of awe and wonder grew systematized reflection; men of superior mental and moral calibre followed Aristotle and other philosophers in the study of natural science, and, as knowledge grew, love and admiration of Nature followed in its train. The idea spread that such study and contemplation not only sharpened the wits but had a purifying and disciplinary influence upon the human soul. Men learned to appreciate the symbolic value of natural objects. It was seen that the estrangement from Nature, her processes and laws, in the popular mind was a very grave mistake. Among the Greek philosophers a mythical or, as I should prefer to say, a

[1] W. Pater's *Miscellaneous Studies*, p. 81.

mystical strain had been at work; the heavenly bodies were affirmed to be divinities. Aristotle thought that Nature, a living being, described a graduated series, a progressive transition whereby matter rose into form, elements into plants, plants into animals, animals into human beings possessing individual souls.[1] The pastoral poets of later Greece loved Nature, and Lucretius regarded her with a species of divine delight and dread; but the romantic spirit, so common in our literature now, with its ardent love of earth and sea, was comparatively rare among the ancients. Gradually, however, Nature-mysticisms became, here an æsthetic form of romanticism, there a spiritualizing of, or attempt to spiritualize, our impressions of material objects. The romanticists, with Schelling as philosopher and Carlyle as prophet, invested the common objects of the natural world with the glamour of mysticism and informed them with a high moral significance. Myth and legend were transformed into allegorical truth, "intuition" of a rather questionable order was crowned with a mystical halo, and there was much rhapsodizing about the transcendental and the Absolute. That highly susceptible Deist, Rousseau, the first Nature-sentimentalist and ancestor of romantic naturalism, found that Nature awakened in him a bewildering passion of unorthodox religiosity; scenes of beauty left him in transports of ecstasy that few mystics could hope to rival. One result of it all was that "artistic" religion of the sensuously mystical type that Rome favours became the fashion, and the Curia reaped a rich harvest of converts.

In all this theorizing Nature, "the time-vesture of the Eternal," etc., played a conspicuous part. The religious mystics of early-mediæval Christianity, who derived most of their ideas from Alexandrian Neo-Platonism, obstinately closed, or professed to close, their eyes to all external things; the contemplative Nature-mystic of our day does exactly the opposite: he opens his eyes as wide as he can, and uses them to the best of his ability. His tendency is to dwell on the glory and goodness of Nature, the "necessity of beauty"

[1] Schwegler's *History of Philosophy*, pp. 111, 113.

under which she lies, rather than to expatiate (as the ancients did) on her evil aspects. He takes his religion, as Emerson puts it, not from the catechism, but from his surroundings. The enchantments of Nature are for him "medicinal"; they are "quarantine powers" that sober and heal us. She is man's friend and sister, or else a mother in whose bosom he nestles and from whose body he receives nourishment for his soul and imagination. If he is a pious man, he sees in her a mirror of Omnipotence, the screen of an unknown reality, a reflection of "many-coloured wisdom" and beneficence. He uses her as an intrument for conveying religious and ethical instruction, because, in his view, she is the language in which God expresses Himself concerning things invisible. Her works are types of spiritual existence; they bear the image and superscription of the Deity, who takes in the intellectual world the place which the sun occupies in the sensible. Just as the moral life has its mystical and transcendental side, so Nature would appear to have a spiritual principle which partakes of the divine: if there is not exactly an identity, there is at any rate a close correspondence between the seen world and the unseen. "Every good man," says the English mystic, John Smith, quoted by Dean Inge, "finds every place he treads upon holy ground; to him the world is God's temple." Renan, as he himself tells us, painted Nature by moral traits; and his great mentor of the seventeenth century, Fénelon, made her a text for elegant sermons slightly tinged with pedantry. The early Fathers had ideas concerning comets, those monstrous dragons that terrified humanity as they rushed through space shaking pestilences from their hair. In the eyes of the pious beholders they were not mere natural phenomena, but manifestations of divine wrath at humanity's misdeeds. But the scientific view eventually prevailed, and the workings of Nature's laboratory began to make their irresistible appeal to intellect as well as to imagination: the dreams of the study and the prophetic inspirations of one generation became the realities of the next, and taught fresh lessons to mankind. The religious instinct of the mystic taught him that external objects, though only shadows of the ideal—yet linked with

it—might help him to gain some knowledge of what lay behind the veil of appearance.

> Spirit that lurks each form within
> Beckons to spirit of its kin :
> Self-kindled every atom glows,
> And hints the future which it owes.[1]

Imbued with these notions, which to some people may savour of hyperbole, we of to-day find it difficult to realize how unattractive Nature was to the average man of olden time. In particular the mountains, which some of us love so dearly, were an abhorrence to him. He regarded them as stern, forbidding things, the natural abode of demons and other unpleasant creatures that shun the plains, the breeding-place of such terrifying portents as whirlwinds, waterspouts, and thunderstorms. Even so cultivated a person as St. Augustine, watching from his villa at Casciago the sunset glow on the Pennines towering above the Piedmont plains, was quite unmoved by the glories of the scene.[2] But in these days many of us positively worship the high and holy places which infuse spiritual exaltation. We do not shudder at them, as the ancients did : we want, on the contrary, to know them more intimately, to make the personal acquaintance of the dragons in glacial shape which our forefathers saw issuing from the caves in the rocks. The mountaineer loves the mountain, and, lover-like, he is apt to expand (as the reader of this chapter may perhaps think) with unnecessary prolixity on the perfections of his adorable mistress. He is not content, like Ruskin, to worship from afar, but demands closer contact with the object of his passion. The mountains, as Ruskin tells us, purify religious faith and stimulate religious enthusiasm : they also act as fuel to the fire of poetic imagination. Even in former ages they acted on occasion as man's spiritual centre in the material universe ; from their slopes were delivered the Mosaic Law and the Christian Beatitudes. Our best hopes and aspirations, our language and metaphors concerning what is holy and of good report, appear in terms of loftiness.

[1] Emerson's *Essays*, p. 294.

[2] *Hellenism and Christianity*, by Edwyn Bevan, p. 113.

Do we not see the artist and poet living in exalted isolation, "proud and remote" upon the heights? The mystical explorers of spiritual altitudes frequently compared themselves to mountaineers. They figured life as one long climb, at one time by the rungs of the *scala perfectionis*, at another up the precipices of some transcendental peak. They sought to arrive at the topmost heights of consciousness, where the view from the summit should be the prospect of infinity.

"Steep and craggy is the path of the gods," as I believe Porphyry observed. Thousands of pilgrims still climb holy mountains, such as Fujiyama, with the zeal and devotion, if not with the technical accomplishment, displayed by members of the Alpine Club. Siva, Vishnu, Ormuzd, had their thrones on lofty peaks surrounded by the eternal snows. The Japanese, who are probably the most fervent Nature-lovers and Nature-worshippers in the world, have a special veneration for their mountains. Mr. Walter Weston, who has a thorough knowledge of the country, tells us that nearly every mountain summit has its own guardian divinity; and Fuji, the "matchless peak," is the Peace-giver, the God, the Treasure.[1] "Who shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord?" asks the Hebrew Psalmist; and only virtuous initiates were deemed worthy of the honour. But the true mystic's mountain is a "mountain without summit," the Peak of Perfection whereof the ascent is never perfected, "the secret top of Horeb" cloaked in darkness, and hidden in mist and mystery that is never dispersed.

As an old mountaineer who has wandered in his time among unmapped hills and over untrodden passes, peaks, and glaciers —but whose climbing days, alas! now are over—I may perhaps be allowed to risk the charge of garrulity and to set down a few further reflections on the subject from a more personal standpoint. It has always seemed to me that the foundation of the true mountaineer's creed, like that of the mystic, is the belief that the essence of life lies in exploration. He has, in greater or lesser degree, that "dim consciousness of the *beyond*" which, as Dean Inge truly says, is part of our

[1] *The Geographical Journal*, February 1924.

nature as human beings. As he toils slowly up the slopes his thoughts dwell on the unknown possibilities lying on the other side. Each peak or pass in front of him is a gateway to the unseen, an introduction to some new and ampler world, and he wants to see over the ridge. Nor are these by any means the limit of the more ardent climber's aspirations. Following the example of the ancient Greeks, he would convert his æsthetic emotions into virtuous dispositions—improve, not only his muscles, but his mind. Like Ibsen's Norwegian hero, out of the solitudes, among the fastnesses of the mountain wilderness, the wanderer learns the secret of living; through the mists on their flanks he discerns things seen but darkly before. In them, the noblest manifestations of Nature, the face of Deity may be descried. For cathedrals there are the massive white domes and slender rock-spires thrusting upwards to the sky: somewhere in the recesses of the everlasting snows some Holy of Holies must lie ensconced.

It is a true word that the aspect which Nature wears to the man who gazes upon her depends upon the mind of the observer; the light by which he sees comes out from his own soul. He must be in harmony with his surroundings and yield himself up sympathetically to them. A keen susceptibility must sharpen his perceptions, or his mind will not be receptive of Nature's appeal. And among the mountains, as it has always seemed to me, this necessary impressionability is heightened in a special degree. The air keen but light, the toil and dangers of the ascent, the grandeur of the surroundings, all combine to create a tension of the mental and bodily faculties. There are vast solitudes around us, yet we are not lonely: the great waste spaces with their fearful silence, the impressive forms of the mountains, the meeting of rock and cloudland on their summits, contain, we feel, something to which our own nature corresponds. They fortify, as it were, and enlarge our petty personalities. The immensity of the vision, suggesting some unknown *hinterland* lying beyond, overwhelms and bewilders us; the distant prospects whisper a message of infinity, and the Great Designer seems everywhere in evidence.

At one time we are impressed by the conjunction of scenes of mingled beauty and terror, where the terror predominates and we seem to get in touch with the spirits of the cloud and the storm. Awe and admiration mingle as we contemplate the majesty of a lofty black cliff, the rim of a thundercloud lit up by the sun's rays, or the exquisite blue of a deep crevasse in whose dark recesses death lurks. At another the spirits of the wilderness seem in good temper, show themselves polite to the traveller, and do not resent his intrusion. Incommunicable forces speak to us in a language of their own that we can understand, and make us thoroughly at home. Nature is in gracious mood; and the heart makes a ready response to her, as to a friend and soul-mate to whom it can safely confide its secrets. There is sympathetic intelligence in the dancing sunlight and shadow; the kindly "Fairy Folk" seem to be about us. We discern their faces among the rocks that a short time ago were scowling down upon us with a threatening air. Those massive clouds over there, above the horizon, may be of such stuff as dreams are made of, but to us they are cheerful castles in the air, grand but hospitable palaces of space. The colours in the sky are as tints from the realm of ideality, clear images of the mind's best thought. All the cruelty and injustice, the anarchy and waste of the universe, are expunged from our consciousness. We cease to think of Nature as she is in the forests below, red in tooth and claw; we forget the lions who, roaring after their prey, do seek their meat from God. Here we are on the confines of the visible and the invisible. Yonder, in the distance, earth touches the sky, and in the far-off mountain mists the material world melts into the great Beyond. The grand Nature-pageant is transfigured in the sweep of our vision, and perhaps by some deception of the senses stands forth as an emblem, a promise of things to come that we know not of.

It may be said that all this is nothing more than "materialism grown sentimental," the picture-language of romantic pantheism, the elated mind or the overstrained body making Nature the echo of its own thoughts, objectifying

its visions and indulging itself in evanescent fervours. The critic may object, with Coleridge, that

> We may not hope from outward form to win
> The passion and the life whose fountains are within.

He may argue that such emotional relationship with the outside world is a thing of little value ; and far be it from me to deny that the critic may be right. It may all be part of the kingdom of illusion ; but man does not live by bread alone, but also by sentiment, by admiration, and (if you will have it so) by hallucination. Whether the alchemy be Nature's, or the product of our own fancies, it boots not to inquire : there it is all the same. It is a genuine transformation scene that we witness, be the methods of transformation what they may. Still let us dream our foolish dreams, if dreams they be. They are at any rate real to us, and for the time ; they do not fade from our memory as the recollection of nocturnal visions fades. A nightly vigil on some moonlit glacier, under the stars winking above the great peaks, creates a host of august and indelible impressions. In the deep red flush of the evening Alpine glow we yield ourselves to Nature's witchery : bathed in the sensuous magic of the hour, our spirits are at peace. In the going forth of the morning in robes of saffron upon the mountains—springing, as Emerson says of poetry, like the rainbow daughter of Wonder from the invisible—the pale glamour of dawn is as a faint reflection of a radiance not of this earth. At these and similar times the impression of a species of spiritual exaltation, some subtle kind of communion with the unseen world, may easily become an apprehension transcending that of the mere visionary's dream. One may say, then, as was said of old time on another mountain-top, "it is good for us to be here."

CHAPTER VII

THE MYSTERIES

Early Christian mysticism, as our leading scholars and churchmen now admit, is inherited from the Greeks. Later Neo-Platonism, says Dean Inge (*Christian Mysticism*, p. 4) "passed almost entire into Christianity," and the process of infiltration proceeded for centuries after Christ was born. Break the link with Platonism and the Neo-Platonists, and Christianity, as the Churches now teach it, falls in pieces. Plato, an "Attic Moses," with something of the Indian temperament in his intellectual make-up, is rightly regarded as the father of modern speculative mysticism, and his philosophy had far greater influence than that of any other pre-Christian writer. His master, Socrates, who was a sort of early psycho-analyst and called himself a mental midwife, had inward "experiences" which any modern might well envy; and Plotinus is in the direct mystical line with these two hierophants. St. Augustine confesses to Plotinus being his earliest guide, and some of our Hellenizing churchmen to-day have strong affinities with the great Carthaginian bishop. The earlier Christians, who had not St. Augustine's scholarship, knew their Plato only through the Neo-Platonism that formed the chief intellectual food of the nations which clustered along the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. These peoples were also steeped in a strange medley of magic and primitive superstition, Orphic, Bacchic, Egyptian, Indian, Persian, Chaldean, and Jewish occult notions, which were popularly supposed to be the cream of divine wisdom, sent down from on high in earlier ages. Such secret doctrine was regarded as the "exclusive possession" (as our latter-day Romanists would say) of initiates in certain esoteric fraternities; and these inspired folk doled out driblets from their accumulated lore to the multi-

tudes who gathered to take part in the ceremonies known as Mysteries.

Fraternities or associations of this kind made their appearance in considerable numbers after the conquests of Alexander the Great. They had secret forms of worship, and the gods they selected for adoration were often foreign ones. Their members were chosen irrespective of nationality or rank, and solely for the purposes of religion; and some writers see in them the first germs of the early Christian Church. Their priests lent themselves to the practice of divination, and sold their services (as Plutarch says) "for the benefit of house-slaves and silly women." It will be remembered that St. Paul (2 Tim. iii. 6) speaks in like manner of certain people who "creep into houses and lead captive silly women laden with sins." All, or nearly all, of these fraternities celebrated mysteries or sacred dramas "setting forth, it would seem, the passion, death, and resurrection of some god." [1]

Our chief knowledge of the doctrines and liturgies connected with these ceremonies is derived from the Greek Mysteries, but there seems no doubt that Egyptian and Oriental Mysteries existed by the hundred. In Alexandria, for instance, the aspirant for initiation had a "mystagogue," or special priest, assigned to him, and this priest, after giving him a suitable course of instruction, decided whether he had a "vocation" or not. If his qualifications were satisfactory he was duly baptized and ordered to abstain from meat, wine, and women for a space of ten days. He also had to indulge in prolonged contemplation of the statue of Isis, which was "adorned with rich robes and jewels after the manner of the Catholic images of the Virgin." [2] At the expiration of the ten days' "retreat" the candidate was clothed in a linen garment and exhibited to the congregation of the faithful, who presented him with gifts. Certain ceremonies, including apparently a sort of mock death and resurrection in imitation of the passion of Osiris,

[1] *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, by F. Legge, i. 21–5.

[2] Ibid., i. 62. The Egyptians represented Isis holding the infant Horus in her arms clad in azure robes and standing on a crescent moon, many centuries before Murillo.

were performed before him, and the proceedings terminated by the initiate entertaining his friends at a banquet in celebration of his formal entry into religion.

The connexion between the Greek and Egyptian mystery-religions, and the strong resemblance of the legends on which they were founded, seem to point to one having been derived from the other, or to both having a common origin.[1] Herodotus (ii. 81) says it is agreed that the rites called Bacchic and Orphic are really Egyptian and Pythagorean. Mr. Legge points out that both Dionysus and Osiris were torn into fourteen pieces; the wanderings of Isis find an exact parallel in those of Demeter; and the mysterious birth of Horus, the successor of Osiris, corresponds point for point with that of Iacchos, or Dionysus in his second form. The Mysteries appear to have had their source in various kinds of folklore, based, probably, on primitive Nature-Mysticism. In some cases they would seem to have been an outcome or development of old-world sacrificial rites instituted to honour dying or suffering gods and goddesses. These rites developed in course of time into mystery-plays, or dramatic representations of episodes in the lives of divine beings or deified heroes. Such representations took place in India and Egypt and, more frequently, in Greece, where they often formed the central attraction in the Mysteries.[2] The earlier and, in the case of certain peoples, the later mystery-ritual was frequently accompanied, as we have seen, by revolting cruelties. The sacrificial victims were scourged and otherwise ill-used before they were slain, and

[1] *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, by Miss J. Harrison, p. 454; Legge, i. 43. See also Frazer's *Golden Bough*, abridged edition, p. 385.

[2] *Pagan Christs*, by J. M. Robertson, pp. 188, 194–5. Some advanced critics maintain that the Gospel narrative of the Crucifixion is in reality a mystery drama. They argue that the events are unnaturally crowded, as in a play; and that the proceedings, as narrated, directly contravene Jewish law. No Hebrew court of justice could open its sessions at night, or (in the case of capital crime) extend its sessions after evening hours. The statement that the judges hunted up false witnesses at dead of night, when all the inhabitants of an Eastern town are asleep, is said to stamp the narrative as unhistorical. Other improbabilities are set forth in *The Inner Meaning of the Four Gospels*, by the Rev. G. T. Sadler, p. 93, and in the works of Renan, Mr. J. M. Robertson, and other writers. It does not appear, however, that the theories based on these improbabilities have so far obtained wide acceptance.

the tears shed by the human scapegoat were supposed to have a special placatory influence upon the deities.[1] The notion that somebody or something has got to be killed, or tortured, in some way for the benefit of other folks is thus seen to be almost universal and of very great antiquity.

Religious drama in India would appear to have been native to the soil, and in existence long before our era: the supposition that it was first introduced into the country by Christians will not hold water for a moment. Support for this view will be found in Mr. Robertson's learned work, *Christianity and Mythology*, 2nd edition, p. 216, where he cites evidence to show that there must have been an abundance of sacred drama in India before the Christian era, as there has been since. Nevertheless, however much religious drama may have existed in Egypt, India, and other countries, it is to Greece that we must turn if we would study to any good effect those mystical rites, exhibited to the people in dramatic form, which we call "Mysteries." In them scholars see an attempt to infuse into Hellenism the spirit of the mysticism of the East, and it has always appeared to me that the influence of Oriental ideas upon Greek thought is generally underestimated. The mind of Plato was heavily charged with Orphic mysticism mainly derived from Asiatic sources. India, always the home of mystical devotion, probably contributed the major share. Through the mysteries the deeper supernaturalism, religion in its higher form as we now understand it, had a spiritualizing influence on the people which the national polytheism could never supply. It is also claimed that they made the people more virtuous, but the evidence for this is not altogether convincing. Impartial churchmen agree in admitting the fact that Christianity, as we now know it, is heavily indebted to the Mysteries; and Miss Harrison (p. 504) says that "the early Christians owed some of their noblest impulses to Orphism." Dr. Inge is perfectly frank and explicit on the matter. He deals mainly with the Eleusinian Mysteries, but as these borrowed their main features from the Orphic ritual they are really the less interesting of the two. In Appendix B

[1] *Pagan Christs*, p. 189.

to his *Christian Mysticism* the Dean points out that "the different conceptions of the office of the Mysteries cannot be separated historically. They all reappear in the history of the Christian sacraments," and may fairly be regarded as a legacy from the old religion to the new.

"It is useless to deny," says the Dean in his *Outspoken Essays*, p. 227, "that St. Paul regarded Christianity, at least on one side, as a mystery-religion. . . . It was as a mystery-religion that Europe accepted Christianity." The early Fathers indicated the alliance between mystery-religion and speculative mysticism within the Church. Salvation, or happiness after death, was the leading desire of pre-Christian mystics, as of modern Christians, and the great promise held out to initiates: the notion of the magical efficacy of the Mysteries as a means of salvation, says Mr. Legge, outweighed everything else in the eyes of their votaries. Salvation, too, was imparted by *revelation*, and the Greeks, like the Orientals, regarded it as emancipation from the fetters of human existence and a deliverance from the curse of sin. Rites were performed for the dead—as Plato tells us in the *Republic*, 365—like our masses; and the initiates were instructed in certain mysterious phrases and formulas which would help them in passing through the realms of Hades. "The family of words," says Vaughan, "relating to mystery, initiation, etc., are adopted into the ecclesiastical phraseology of the early Christian world, —not in the modified use of them occasionally observable in St. Paul, but with their old Pagan significance"; the Dean of St. Paul's enlarges on the point, but shows that the Apostle "repeatedly" uses technical terms belonging to the Mysteries.

Much, also, of the ritual and ceremonial observance in the Mysteries passed bodily into the Church. The Greeks trusted to mystic baptism to wash out all their sins, and there was an obligatory confession of sin before admission to the ceremonies. The mystics assembled in large numbers for their purifying bath, and, with the cry of "To the sea, ye mystics!" rushed into the salt water. Each mystic was accompanied by a *pharmakos* (purifying agent or scapegoat). At the Eleusinian Mysteries

the " scapegoat " was a young pig, and the purificatory porker himself had to be purified in the waves along with his master. On one occasion, " when a mystic was bathing with his pig in the harbour called Kantharos, a sea-monster ate off the lower part of his body " ; and this was regarded as an omen that the enemy, who was besieging the town, would capture the lower portion, but not the upper.[1]

In the Orphic Mysteries we find, in addition to baptism, such rites as the Sacred Marriage, the *Omophagia* or sacramental eating of flesh, whereby a man could renew the divine within him, and also the Birth of the Holy Child, Dionysus, revealed to the *epoptæ* (initiates) at night : " Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." [2] " At Eleusis," says Miss Harrison, " the Marriage and the Birth were the culminating ritual acts, whereby *union with the divine*, the goal of all mystic ceremonial, was at first held to be actually effected, later symbolised." " The mysteries of these man-made gods are but the eternal mysteries of the life of man." The Orphics found in the Mysteries a sacramental and purifying " grace " which had a magical effect on the initiate's lot in the next world. There was the certainty of beatitude for the elect, quite apart from personal merit ; and Diogenes the Cynic complained that the brigand Patecion, who had been initiated, had thus earned " salvation," while the virtuous but uninitiated Epaminondas was condemned to undergo tortures [3]—just as Roman Catholic doctrine condemns unbaptized babies to Limbo, or worse.

The Orphics, according to Mr. Legge, were of Asiatic, mostly Phrygian, origin ; and their religious teaching was the outcome of that " marriage " between East and West which is responsible for so much strange and incongruous religious material. Nearly all their early poems are assigned to Pythagoreans, who are supposed with good reason to have had Oriental affiliations ; and M. Maeterlinck (*The Secret Doctrine*, p. 261) gives excellent authority for the statement that certain Orphic poems contain lines which are translated word for word from the Vedic hymns. That several Orphic ideas and rites were borrowed

[1] *Prolegomena*, p. 153. [2] Ibid., p. 549. [3] Legge, i. 131.

from the Egyptians seems to be incontestable,[1] and it is arguable that these may have been an infiltration of some primitive, and possibly universal traditions. Orpheus was a development of Dionysus, or Bacchus, a legendary divinity who was a great improvement on his predecessor. Bacchus was a confirmed toper, but Orpheus was Bacchus made sober and respectable, exchanging his orgiastic airs for the outward decorum of a "musicianly priest," in order to satisfy the needs of a more cultivated society. But he did more than this: he "took an ancient superstition, deep-rooted in the savage ritual of Dionysus, and lent to it a new spiritual significance."[2] The early Church, as Miss Harrison says, saw in the saintly and ascetic figure of Orpheus, so strange in its modernity, the prototype of her Christ. In the worship of Dionysus we have "the element of direct impersonation which helped on the conviction that man could identify himself with his God." This is one of the ideas which lie at the root of much later mysticism. Orphism was also a step towards monotheism, and it appears to have had glimpses of the evolutionary process: its ideas, which were regarded as universally authoritative, reappear again and again in later systems. We find a historical connexion and continuity between various mystical groups, a sort of apostolic succession which is unbroken through the ages. There is a distinctly Augustinian flavour, for example, in Herodotus' description of the Thracian Orphists who used to gather weeping round the new-born child, bewailing its entry into this miserable world, while they rejoiced when one of their friends had obtained a happy release by death.[3] The Greek Furies, by the way, were "Angels of Torment," and in later days went on to people Hell with its familiar horrors.

It was the idea of the earlier Orphics that the whole of this earthly life should be made a preparation for the next, and they found the same difficulty that modern pietists do in combining the purely religious life with civic duties. This

[1] The magical password which admits the dead man into the next world, and makes him a god, seems to be derived from the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* (see Budge's *History of the Egyptian People*, ch. vii; Legge, i. 134).

[2] *Prolegomena*, p. 473. [3] Legge, i. 136.

difficulty was solved, as their successors attempt to solve it, by participation in certain rites and mysteries which in themselves had a saving influence and secured the initiate's entry into bliss.

> Happy and Blessed One ! thou shalt be god instead of mortal.[1]

And the way of the mystic through life was neither broad nor easy. "Many are the thyrsus-bearers, but few the Bacchi," or initiates (Many are called, but few are chosen), says the well-known Orphic text. The ranks of the elect were difficult to enter. But Orphism, like other faiths, had its weak points. Its theology was not slow in finding short cuts to Paradise. There was the usual tendency, observable in nearly all religions, to become formal and mechanical, to rely on charms and talismans and incantations as a means of salvation, rather than on virtuous living. This is the way of indolence: and indolence, the line of least resistance, is a constant danger attaching to the mystical habit. And the Orphics, as Mr. Legge points out, while deifying abstractions in some instances, fell into the common habit of materializing their gods and the worship connected with them. Stage-machinery was not wanting to the Mysteries, any more than it is to our modern faiths: the pantomimic element was continually in evidence. Miss Harrison is justly severe on the "absurd mummery and hocus-pocus" of the *Bouphonia*, or ritual of the Murder of the Ox, which she says makes us reflect on the nature and strength of religious conservatism; but we ought to remember that the world was younger then, and "hocus-pocus" (*hoc est Corpus*) is not confined to Greek or other ancient mysteries.

Lastly, we come to the familiar point of syncretism, the attempt to make a fusion (or confusion) of different, and often opposing, gods and speculative theories into one comprehensive system. "The weak point of the Orphic was, of course, that he could not, would not, break with either ancient ritual or ancient mythology, could not trust the great new revelation which bade him become 'divine,' but must needs mysticize

[1] *Prolegomena*, p. 600.

and reconcile archaic obsolete traditions." [1] And Mr. Legge corroborates with the remark that "the *theocrasia*, or fusion of one god with another, which we have seen playing such a prominent part in the religion of both Egyptians and Greeks, was of the very essence of the religion of Eleusis." The Orphic Dionysus was female as well as male, "the common type of all goddesses as well as of all gods"—Adonis, Attys, Osiris, Zeus, Apollo, and others. But this syncretizing tendency, the blending of divinities and doctrine, which has played so enormously important a part in the formation of all great religions, deserves a chapter to itself.

[1] Ibid., p. 495.

CHAPTER VIII

SOME EARLY SYNCRETISTS

To the candid historian of our day, Latin Christianity, as we see it now, is not one religion, but an ingenious blending of many religions. In the writer's previous book,[1] attention was drawn to the essentially syncretistic character of the Catholic faith in its existing form. It was shown how the early simplicity of Christian doctrine was overlaid in successive stages with a patchwork quilt of alien material, until it became to a large extent a congeries of Pagan myth and ritual. The Christian ecclesiastics adopted the statesmanlike, and Pauline, principle of being all things to all men. In their desire to retain Greek mysticism and other "heathen" culture, along with the more distinctively religious theories of the new creed, they made a fusion of heterogeneous religious ideas held by people of different race and unequal stages of civilization. It is no doubt true that, as Mr. Edwyn Bevan remarks in his scholarly *Hellenism and Christianity*, chapter iv, Christianity did not swallow Hellenistic theology whole. It was eclectic as well as syncretistic: the ecclesiastics selected what they liked, or rather what suited their purposes best, and rejected the rest. The Church followed what M. Loisy calls "a politic line" by borrowing copiously, and displayed a most praiseworthy spirit of accommodation. Materializing here, allegorizing there, and assimilating all round, she conformed with marvellous facility to the needs and wishes of the new converts. Symbolical interpretation was found very successful in reconciling theories that were otherwise irreconcilable. In this way, and through the "natural exigencies of propagandism," heresy became a feeder to so-called orthodoxy, and furnished the latter with

[1] *Priestcraft: A Study in Unnecessary Fictions*, ch. vi, vii.

numerous and valuable recruits. The Church, with an adaptivity that extorts our admiration, established her doctrine on a foundation which would be regarded as satisfactory by the heathen converts. "The faith once delivered to the Saints" was wondrously transfigured, and all sorts of odd sheep were admitted to Rome's hospitable fold.

The clerical politicians of the nascent religion could adduce innumerable precedents for the methods they adopted. Every great mystical faith is of this type; it is a hotchpot of discrete, and sometimes contradictory, ideas, and has its roots in many soils. Christianity, now regarded by many churchmen as "a process rather than a result," was not built in a day; and I now propose to cite in brief a few further examples of successful religion-building on a syncretic basis, and usually from political motives.

In nearly all these fusions we see the same principles and methods at work. Politics and piety, religion and statecraft, are welded together in an indissoluble union; and fanaticism is exploited everywhere for purely secular ends. Creeds, rites, and superstitions of all kinds are utilized as pawns in the great game of political evolution and worldly ambitions. The process may be roughly illustrated as follows. Tribe A, worshipping divinity D, conquers tribe B worshipping divinity E and tribe C worshipping divinity F. Each tribe wants to retain its own god, so the victorious chieftain of A, anxious to consolidate his dominions by accommodating all parties, unites the three divinities, D, E, and F, in a trinity. The new subjects must have a worship provided for them that they approve; and, if the required deity is not forthcoming, one must be manufactured in accordance with their tastes. Egypt, the home of clericalism for thousands of years, is usually looked upon as the classic example of political priestcraft manipulating religion for its own ends; and the Egyptian gods had their names, attributes, and worship continually changed, or fused with those of other gods, for reasons of state. Osiris, Ra, Ptah, Serapis, Seker, Tum, Thoth, Isis, and others all underwent numerous and remarkable transformations. The rich and powerful among the Egyptians raised temples to Ra and Amen

and showered wealth upon their priesthoods, but the masses remained faithful to Osiris and certain other divinities with such effect that they had to be included in the national Olympus. In some cases fashion, apart from policy, dictates the multiplication of new deities, or their adaptation to old ones. The ancient gods, with their baggage of quaint ritual and fantastic myth, wandered westward from place to place, and many of them found a suitable resting-place in Rome. Juvenal in a well-known passage describes how the Orontes was emptying itself into the Tiber in his time, when there was a veritable flood of Oriental mysticism and theosophy pouring into Rome. In like manner the Rhine was said to have overflowed into the Thames during the latter half of the last century, when German idealism flooded Great Britain with the turbid waters of a terribly abstruse metaphysic. The Athenians, as we have seen, adapted the primary Mystery-cults to their own purposes and to the worship of their own gods and goddesses: such syncretism, or *theocrasia*, was an essential part of the Eleusinian religion. Mr. Legge points out that Dionysus (who had been declared to be the same god as Hades) was, in this double capacity, "brother, father, and spouse of his consort, Demeter, of whom he was also the child." Further, in Asia Dionysus was regarded as being of both sexes;[1] so we have here theocrasia *in excelsis*. Mithraism also combined a number of foreign deities and theological ideas imported from outside. The leaders of Manichæanism essayed to effect a union of Christianity, Buddhism, and Zoroastrianism, and tried to reduce to one harmonious system theories laboriously collected from India, Greece, and Egypt. According to the orthodox Epiphanius, Scythicus (a very learned man, and the earliest founder of the Manichæan cult), after marrying an "enfranchised courtesan," whom he had previously purchased out of the ample fortune amassed on his travels, "out of sheer idleness and licentiousness, set up to preach new doctrines not derived from Scripture."[2] These calumnious statements,

[1] Legge, i. 47. According to the Orphics Zeus was a "male," and also "an immortal virgin" (ibid.).

[2] *The Gnostics and their Remains*, by C. W. King, p. 43.

however, are ascribed by the Rev. C. W. King to theological malice; and there really seems no good reason to question the sincerity of Scythicus. The Essenes were also syncretists, and Josephus tells us how, after studying the writings of the ancients, they "chose out of them what was most for the advantage of their soul and body." [1] Considerations of space prevent me from enlarging my list of examples; and I will therefore concentrate on what is, next to Latin Christianity, probably the most remarkable instance of religious syncretism known to us in history.

The death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C., at the early age of 32, left the vast dominions which he had so rapidly acquired in a state of terrible confusion. Destiny had denied to him, the greatest of captains, the opportunity of proving to the world the political capacity which he undoubtedly possessed; and he left no successor equal to the task of bearing the vast burden of empire, and consolidating the territories, which were the fruit of his victories. The marshals of the great conqueror, quarrelling over the spoils, eventually arrived at a provisional arrangement. It was decided, amongst other things, that Ptolemy I Soter, or Saviour, should have as his share Egypt, Libya, and the adjacent countries, the whole constituting a province of moderate extent but enormous resources. Ptolemy, a man of great natural shrewdness, knew well the unlimited possibilities of his new domain, and he at once set about the task of consolidating his position by every means in his power. Among other things, he was too acute not to perceive the immense influence which religion, cleverly handled, has in welding men and nations together. Religion, he saw, must be conciliated at any cost: experience had shown that the only chance for an invader, or for a rebel against a tyrant's yoke, lay in securing the help of a powerful and ambitious hierarchy.[2] The conquests of Ptolemy's master, Alexander, had brought East and West together in marvellous fashion, and, as Mr. Legge says in his admirable sketch of a period so vital in the

[1] Legge, i. 154.

[2] See Mahaffy's *Empire of the Ptolemies*, p. 4; Budge's *History of the Egyptian People*, p. 200 sq.

history of religions,[1] it was not long " before the marriage of Europe and Asia had become a real and pregnant fact."

There were many ways in which Alexander's victories had prepared the path for a religion which would attract the men of mixed race and language who came under his sway. The deification of Alexander during his lifetime had familiarized people with the idea of the divine right of kings ; and Ptolemy, who had probably derived his theories of government from his illustrious chief, saw that a monarch who was also a theocrat was the right sort of ruler for his new subjects. He recognized, also, that he must consult their wishes in the type of religion which he intended to set up. There must be a spirit of accommodation, if he would unite opposing factions by the ties of a common culture and a single faith. Mr. Legge is probably right when he says that, " from the scientific point of view, there is none among the forerunners of Christianity who did more to prepare and make ready its way than Alexander " ; and we are also told that " he found little difficulty in coming to terms with the colleges of greedy and unpatriotic priests who were ready to welcome any foreign master so long as their own position was assured." He and Ptolemy anticipated the practice of the Roman Church by making off with the clothes of other religions, but again, like their illustrious successor, they were careful to take out the old markings and to affix new and attractive labels.

It would seem clear, therefore, that it was roughly on the lines laid down by his royal master that Ptolemy acted. The idea of a religion common to Greek and barbarian may well have been one of Alexander's plans. It is certain that he had aimed at the fusion of Greeks and Orientals, and he greatly pleased the Egyptians by sacrificing piously to the gods of Memphis. Among his cherished projects was the creation of magnificent religious edifices in Greece, Macedonia, and other countries.[2] Be this as it may, Ptolemy at once proceeded to put his plans into operation. For this purpose he determined to combine such mystical theories as were common to Greeks,

[1] Legge, i, ch. i, ii.

[2] See Grote's *History of Greece*, xii. 432.

Egyptians, and other "barbarians" in that part of the world. In Greece, where a much higher standard of culture and greater brain-power prevailed, there existed myths of superior quality that were spread throughout the basin of the Mediterranean. To affiliate these with the worship of Ra and Amen, which were in the hands of powerful ecclesiastical corporations, was a task of no small difficulty. It is doubtful, as M. Maeterlinck thinks, if Egyptian religion was ever of the sublime character which certain Egyptologists have attributed to it, and in its later days it has degenerated under the priests into the "systematized sorcery" described by Mr. Legge. The connexion between Greek and Egyptian religion is set out at length in his works and in those of Miss Harrison, Sir W. Budge, and other writers; and in the legend of Osiris Ptolemy found one strong point of contact. The "greedy priesthood" was accordingly invited to co-operate in founding the new religion; and two prominent members of the sacred caste, one Greek and one Egyptian, were entrusted with the work. It was, above all things, necessary to avoid shocking susceptibilities in religious and artistic matters, and Ptolemy founded a great university, or Museum, for the sustentation of scholars.[1] It was no use asking a cultured Hellenic gentleman to worship a god who appeared on one day as a bull, on another as a jackal or ibis; or a goddess (Isis) who was portrayed with a cow's head; but a way was soon found out of the difficulty. The "mystic theocrasia," or blending of gods, was called into play: a trinity was created, of whose members it was agreed that Osiris should appear as the Greek Hades, Isis as Demeter, and Horus as Apollo—both the two last being sun-gods. Had not Herodotus, and probably other Greek writers, long before made the same identification?[2]

Then there was a new god who was henceforth called Serapis (Osiris in his manifestation as Apis) and represented as a bearded man of mature age and considerable dignity. King Ptolemy had a convenient dream which revealed to him the existence of a colossal statue that exactly represented the

[1] Mahaffy's *Empire of the Ptolemies*, p. 93 sq.
[2] Ibid., p. 72; Legge, i. 48.

divinity. The statue obliged by turning up somewhere in unexpected fashion, and was installed with great pomp in the Serapeum. Serapis, by the way, was one of the most syncretic divinities that ever existed: he drew to himself the worship of Zeus, Osiris, Dionysus, Adonis, Attys, and a whole heap of Mediterranean divinities. He is described as the compassionate "Protector and Saviour of all men," "the most loving of gods towards men"; his heart was "greatly turned towards mercy," and he was "the light common to all men," a Father whose beneficence extended beyond the grave. The pathetic element, which in Roman Christianity is supplied by the Virgin Mary, was represented in Egypt by Isis, a stately matron clad in blue robes and standing on a crescent moon as she holds the divine child in her arms. She is the "haven of peace and altar of pity," "the holy and eternal protectress of the race of men"; and her sweet affection scattered good deeds night and day. She was the patron of mariners, just as Mary is *Stella Maris*. St. Alphonsus Liguori himself could not have surpassed the description of the happy lot of the "earthly stars" who were her favourites, or of those who devote themselves to her service. "When the Egyptians embraced Christianity," says Sir W. Budge in his *History of the Egyptian People*, p. 181, "they saw nothing strange in identifying her with the Virgin Mary, and her son Horus with the Babe Christ." Many other expressions were employed which anticipated the terms of endearment so freely addressed by Catholics nowadays to the Virgin.[1] To Isis, Serapis, and other gods and goddesses Ptolemy erected many temples in various parts of the country: indeed, most of the surviving Egyptian temples are said to be partly, if not wholly, of Ptolemaic construction.[2]

Many scholars are of opinion that the Eleusinian Mysteries had their origin in Egypt, and the undoubted affinity between

[1] The poetic genius of Anglo-Catholicism expresses itself in the following lines of a popular hymn:

Through the streets of heaven, Mary, thou dost tread,
Roses in thy bosom, stars upon thy head.

This effusion was too much even for the Ritualistic Bishop of London, who refused to preside at a meeting if the hymn was sung.

[2] Mahaffy, p. 72.

the religions of the two countries must have greatly facilitated the work of the syncretists. Ptolemy's plan was successful for a while: religion once more, and for the hundredth time, played an important part in the drama of empire. In one respect the Egyptian religion was superior to the Hellenic. In place of woebegone phantoms passing in melancholy procession through drear Homeric shades, it promised true believers a heaven which possessed certain attractions; and the Greeks appear to have willingly adopted these more cheerful ideas. The new religion-builders, with the accumulated skill of centuries of priestcraft behind them, did not omit to introduce a system of initiation which, while bringing grist to the clerical mill, would assure the mystic of celestial favours in the world to come. Mr. Legge observes that "while in every religion there are a few devotees who are prepared to go all lengths in theology or inquiry into the nature of their gods, the majority are attracted to it more from a vague desire to enter into amicable relations with the spiritual world than from any other feeling"; and it is not likely that many people who attended the mystical ceremonies had any clear idea what it was all about. For this reason the Alexandrian priests instituted an elaborate system of stage-machinery, music, incense, priests with shaven polls and wearing gorgeous vestments, which duly impressed the worshipper, just as such things impress certain people in our day. "The Passion—as it was distinctly called—and the Resurrection of Osiris," who was the "incarnation of the great primeval god who created the heavens and the earth," were yearly and openly "celebrated by the worshippers of the Alexandrian gods with alternate demonstrations of grief and joy"; and these rites were introduced into Italy.[1] In Rome Isis bewails and searches for her lost son, "Osiris" (Mr. Legge explains the occasional confusion between Osiris and Horus by the fact that Horus was regarded as Osiris re-born), and there is general rejoicing when he is found. Juvenal (*Sat.*, vi. 533; vii. 30) gives a graphic account of the bald-headed multitude running to and fro and looking for "Osiris," and their exultant cries on finding him; and we

[1] Budge's *Literature of the Egyptians*, p. 12; Legge, i. 69.

learn that he irreverently laughed at the crowd beating their breasts as he passed.

The Greek and Alexandrian priests and oracles made much money by their incantations, the practice of divination, and other forms of imposture. The Egyptian clerics, says Sir W. Budge, "were stewards of all the mysteries of heaven and earth"; and, like the Irish priests of our day, had a finger in every pie. They took toll of the people in all sorts of ways. They were mummifiers and undertakers who "enjoyed a monopoly in burials," and no doubt charged heavily for the elaborate funerary ceremonies which they devised. They composed liturgies, said masses for the dead, arranged hymns and music, and furnished the trappings and appurtenances of religion. They "magnified their office" (like our modern Tractarians), and generally behaved like earthly divinities who were indispensable intermediaries between gods and men.

The numerous foreign priests, oracle-mongers and sooth-sayers—the spawn of syncretized magic—who came fortune-hunting in Rome, are severely dealt with by Latin writers of the first and second centuries. "What on earth should I do at Rome?" Juvenal indignantly asks: "I am no good at lying[1] . . . I am incapable of puffing a bad book, or asking for it at the libraries. I cannot make money by astrology, or by inspecting the entrails of frogs." The Alexandrian priests also added to their income by expounding dreams and giving the gods' answers to them; by occasionally acting as panders and procurers for the rich,[2] and by pretending to effect miraculous cures. The decadence of Rome is attributed to the vice and abominable superstition imported from the Orient. By the end of the second century the "Alexandrian religion had become a state religion, served by a fully organized and powerful priesthood": Rome alone possessed no less than seven temples of Isis. It is noteworthy, moreover, that the Alexandrian clergy, like those of the Roman Church, were

[1] *Quid Romæ faciam? Mentiri nescio* (Sat. iii. 41. This line is frequently cast in the teeth of Roman Catholic controversialists who "crucify the truth head downwards").

[2] Legge, i. 78.

divided into seculars and regulars for practical purposes. The life of the recluses devoted to the service of some god resembled that of Christian monks.[1]

For more than three centuries the Alexandrian religion, founded by Ptolemy, held its own; but, as Mr. Legge says, it was, from the political standpoint, foredoomed from the first to eventual failure. "The worship of the great Egyptian triad under their Greek forms was inaugurated, as was our English Reformation in the sixteenth century, as a measure of statecraft, by a king who hardly cared to conceal that in doing so he had only his own interest to serve." The Egyptian religion, at any rate in its later stages, was a clotted mass of superstition, and the people were fanatically attached to the transitional modes of worship. They were good churchmen owning a dual allegiance, and when the interests of the church and state conflicted they ranged themselves on the side of their religion. They did not scruple to accept the rule of "foreign bayonets," if only they could preserve the worship of their native gods in its ancient form. The same processes were at work that the world has seen operating for a thousand years in later religions: a degraded superstition and a bastard mysticism took the place of whatever was good and great in the older religion; the people turned back to the "beggarly rudiments," and desired to be in bondage to them again. They preferred to feed on chaff. To have their religion beautified and dignified by Greek art or any foreign culture was repugnant to them, so by a species of passive resistance they forced their foreign rulers to accept native rites and customs which, however debased, had, at any rate, centuries of usage to recommend them. Hence Ptolemy's successors "found it necessary to pay more and more attention to the native Egyptian religion," and the higher Greek elements were as far as possible excluded.

Nevertheless, as we have seen, the new faith grew and extended its borders northwards and westwards: it was a second-class age, and its faiths were of still lower quality. The worship of Serapis was established in Greece, Asia Minor, and Sicily. From there it crept northwards up the Italian

[1] Legge, p. 80.

peninsula, and somewhere about 80 B.C. the Alexandrian religion got a firm footing in Rome. Here, during the second century A.D., it is said to have reached its apogee in the days of the Antonines, but from that time forward it steadily declined. It had to face the competition of other syncretistic cults built upon foundations which offered a greater prospect of permanence. Better, bigger, and more skilfully combined systems of mystical *theocrasia* were at work elsewhere, and gradually ousted it from popular favour. Mithraism was no mean adversary; and Christianity, directed by far more capable brains than its rivals could produce, offered advantages which Alexandrianism never possessed. The Roman blend of Greek culture, Latin statecraft, and Oriental mysticism formed a syncretic system greatly superior in attractiveness and efficiency. The edicts and subsequent conversion of the Emperor Constantine the Great placed the new Church, politically, in an impregnable position. The Alexandrian religion survived the blow for fifty years, but it came to a violent end in the closing decades of the fourth century. Yet, though outwardly dead, it still lived, and continues to live, in many rites and usages and beliefs of Latin Christianity. The devotees of Isis, for example, were allowed to "continue unchecked their worship of the mother goddess by merely changing the name of the object of their adoration; and Professor Drexler gives a long list of the statues of Isis which thereafter were used, sometimes with unaltered attributes, as those of the Virgin Mary."[1] Other elements of the religion were left undisturbed in accordance with the conciliatory tactics of the new church-builders, whose policy it was to attract adherents by every means in their power. One system of magic had disappeared, and another—based, however, on surer foundations, possessing greater unity and simplicity, and with a finer perception of humanity's real needs—had taken its place.

[1] Legge, i. 85.

CHAPTER IX

GNOSTICISM

GNOSTICISM is a system of theosophical philosophy with a large admixture of myth, magic, and quaint legendary lore concerning the gods, whereby (as its professors assert) mankind may obtain an intimate *gnosis*, or knowledge, concerning the divine world, its motives and origins, and an acquaintance with certain rites, formulas, and ceremonies which are supposed to exercise a compelling influence upon its rulers: the system is an intellectual fabric, ascetic and pessimistic, reared out of various mythologies. The term "Gnostics" is used to designate a number of sects with widely differing tenets, a vast mass of legend and mystical speculation, which existed in the Eastern provinces of the Roman Empire during, and long antecedent to, the early days of Christianity. Many of these sects were imbued with the notion, common to many primitive faiths—including the Orphic—that the spiritual powers are subject, not merely to propitiatory influences, but also to compulsion. The divinities can be coerced as well as placated by offerings and prayer, threatened and bullied no less than cajoled. Things can be done, and words said, which will *force* the divinity or demon to do what we want, and will bind him to our service. Charms, spells, masses, incantations, amulets, etc., can be obtained (for a consideration, of course) from duly constituted magicians which will have this desirable effect, and, when the deity has carried out your orders, he can be summarily dismissed. The knowledge, or *gnosis*, which conferred these powers constituted an esoteric theology of which the popular creeds, with their Olympus of deities and rites and sacrificial worship, were but the exoteric form. When St. Paul said that he warred, not against flesh and blood, but against Dominions, Spirits, and malevolent Lords

of Darkness, he was alluding to the Gnostic hosts in the unseen world, and employing the exact terminology of Gnosticism. It has been well said that the later Gnosticism was " the spirit of Asiatic antiquity seeking to assert its empire over the soul of Man by insinuating itself into the Christian Church."[1]

It is a great mistake, however, to suppose—as so many people suppose even in these days—that Gnosticism was simply a heresy, a spurious offshoot or sophistical perversion of Christianity invented by disappointed apostates from the true faith. No doubt the later Gnostics borrowed largely from Christianity, but it is now generally admitted by scholars that their main ideas existed long before the Christian era. The discovery in 1851, in the British Museum, of *Pistis Sophia*—an alleged record (ascribed to Valentinus) of Christ's teaching during the *eleven* years He was supposed to have passed on earth after His crucifixion—and kindred works, proved the existence of early Gnostic sects whose weird theories were based on Pythagorean, Platonic, and other pre-Christian philosophies. " It is now recognized on all hands," says Mr. Edwyn Bevan in his authoritative *Hellenism and Christianity*, p. 90, that Christian Gnosticism " was not a wanton perversion of a clearly articulated theology," but an attempt to combine the Church's teaching with the best conceptions and aspirations already prevalent in the Gentile world. Simon Magus, for example, was described by all the Fathers as a horrible sorcerer, and also as the parent of all later Gnosticism; but the story in Acts viii makes it quite clear that the sect of which he became the leader was a pre-Christian one.[2] Simon had Alexandrian or Egyptian affinities, and it seems fairly certain that, already in the Apostolic age,

[1] King's *Gnostics and their Remains*, p. 9.

[2] Legge, i. 176. The universal tradition of the Catholic Church, quoted by Mr. Legge, represents Simon as being, not merely a reprobate of the worst type, but also as an early airman of considerable merit. He attempted to convert the Emperor Nero to his heresy by flying over the Campus Martius in a car drawn by demons; but his wicked designs were detected and frustrated by a superior " ace," in the person of St. Peter, who flew after him and vanquished him in mortal combat, causing him to " crash " violently to earth and so to perish miserably.

Pagan belief and practice had filtered into the original Gospel. Gnosticism, as we understand the word, presents us with a good deal more than a mere academy of old-world imaginings and theosophic maunderings; it raises questions which vitally affect the fabric of Catholic, and indeed Christian doctrine. It was a blend of old and new, and its educative influence on the disciples of the growing Christian faith was immense. It allied itself with philosophic learning, forced the ecclesiastics to take a broader view of life and its mysteries, added elements which made a more universal appeal, and greatly assisted the new religion to triumph over its adversaries. It laid the foundations of a theology which at least made a rational attempt to grapple with those problems of the universe which still baffle our attempts to solve them, and it formed a half-way house between Christianity and heathendom. It seems quite possible that, had it not been for the Gnostic cult, the Church might have become a congeries of narrow Puritanical sects, and so have died an early death. Many good Christians gloried in the name of Gnostic; the New Testament, Revelation in particular, is full of Gnostic ideas, and St. Paul's "gospel" (as he calls it in Romans ii. 16) is permeated with the ideas of Hellenistic Gnosticism. Some writers find in certain Gospel utterances (Matt. xiii. 11–14; Mark iv. 11–12; Luke viii. 10) evidence of "the essential spirit of Gnosticism," an exclusive esotericism reserved for the chosen few; but this is more doubtful.

Among the Greek Fathers mysticism and Gnosticism were not in opposition, but clearly related. They were "mystic-gnostic," Clement and Origen being especially gnostical.[1] In Neo-Platonism, too, the Gnostic strain is very apparent. The works of Rome's canonized fraud, St. Dionysius, are strongly impregnated with the wild ideas and jargon of the sect. His wonderful "orders" of supernatural beings, apparently borrowed from the cult over which Simon Magus presided, passed bodily into orthodox Christianity;[2] and the notions of the "Areopagite" were largely used by the Scholastics, St. Thomas Aquinas himself (as I stated in *Priestcraft*, ch. vii),

[1] See Rufus Jones's *Studies in Mystical Religion*, p. 84, n.

[2] Legge, i. 188, n.

being greatly indebted to them. This observation, by the way, brought down upon me a lengthy and savage series of attacks by that accomplished zealot, Mr. Hilaire Belloc. After describing me as "a certain Mr. Stutfield,"[1] "a man without education," who talked a lot of "trash," he characterized my statement about St. Thomas as "nonsense." But Dulac, and another authority cited by Mr. Rufus Jones in his *Studies of Mystical Religion* (p. 100), say that the Angelic Doctor borrowed extensively from Dionysius: if the latter's works had been lost, it is stated, they could be almost reconstructed from Aquinas. Baron von Hügel, by no means an uneducated man, and one who seldom talks nonsense, says the "Areopagite's" writings became "the great treasure-house from which the Mystics, and also largely the Scholastics, throughout the Middle Ages, drew much of their literary material."[2] In Liguori's *Necessity of Prayer*, on sale in Westminster Cathedral, we find St. Thomas quoting at considerable length from Dionysius; and the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (art. "Aquinas") says that St. Thomas was "taught by" the Pseudo-Dionysius, "who so marvellously influenced mediæval writers." In his anxiety to discredit an opponent, Mr. Belloc, not for the first time, allows his valorous zeal for the Church to outrun discretion, courtesy, and accuracy.

Behind the later Gnosticism of the Christian era there lay a great mass, as is now generally admitted, of Pagan belief dating from much earlier times. "In religion," says the Rev. C. W. King in his *Gnostics and their Remains*, p. viii, "there is no new thing; the same ideas are worked up over and over again": principles and traditions, since palmed off on the world as new, unique, and unprecedented, were taught in the schools of an

[1] Whenever a man annoys Mother Church she invariably retaliates by calling him "a certain" Mr. So-and-so. When Lord Denbigh attacked the Irish hierarchy, in 1918, his fame was dimmed by appearing in print as "a certain Lord Denbigh." St. Augustine, who was steeped in Ciceronian literature, referred contemptuously in later life to the works of *cujusdam Ciceronis* ("a certain Mr. Cicero." See *Confessions*, iii. 7). St. Jerome, I may mention, tells us how he was summoned before the tribunal of Christ, and severely flogged by the angels, because he read too much Cicero. (*Ep.* xxii—see Lecky's *History of European Morals*, ii. 123).

[2] *The Mystical Element of Religion*, p. 61.

unknown antiquity. Prominent among these enduring and recurrent ideas, most of which have their probable origin in Indian speculative mysticism and philosophy, are those of the Soter (Saviour or Redeemer) and the archetypal or Primal Man, created ages before terrestrial man, who was made in his image. The First Man, sometimes called the "Son of Man," appears in the Phrygian, Babylonian, and Jewish religions: many Gnostic sectarians attributed their religion, not untruly, to Orphic teaching.[1] The Gnostic Primal Man was a sort of early Christ, or Saviour: he is variously described in mystical language as the eternal Heavenly Man in men, the Word or personification of Divine Wisdom, a mystic invisible, crucified, and risen Christ, the Logos sown as the Saviour into souls.[2] He had sunk down into matter, freed himself and risen out of it again, and, like him, his members will rise out of darkness into light. The Gnostic idea of Christ, according to some modern writers, was that He was not a man, but a divine Life ascending and descending to earth, and being metaphorically "crucified" in the finite, in order to save men's souls. "The Cross, to Gnostics, meant the boundary (Horos) between the eternal and the phenomenal: and in it the Son of God was fixed," as prefigured in Plato's *Timæus*.[3] These ideas were not new: they had already appeared in Jewish, and pre-Christian, Apocalyptic literature, and also in the works of Philo-Judæus. In the *Book of Enoch*, a very remarkable Gnostical Hebrew work, written (as the best scholars agree) several years before the Christian era, Christ (the Anointed) appears as substantially a deity. He is said to be the Son of Man, and also (according to some writers) the Son of God, the Chosen One (compare Luke xxiii. 35), who sits on the throne of glory as Judge (Enoch XLV. 3, LI). He will choose out the righteous at the day of judgment, when the kings of the earth will "see that Son of Man sitting on the throne of his glory."[4] He is to be

[1] Legge, i. lxi. 112; *Encyclopædia Britannica*, art. "Gnosticism."

[2] *Behind the New Testament*, by the Rev. G. T. Sadler, p. 10.

[3] *The Inner Meaning of the Four Gospels*, by the same author, Foreword.

[4] See *The Book of Enoch*, by Dr. R. H. Charles, Archdeacon of Westminster, lxii. 5; and also the same, edited by the Rev. W. O. E. Oesterley, D.D. (S.P.C.K.).

" the light of the Gentiles " (Enoch xlviii. 4), who will eventually repent (L). His hair is " white like wool " (as in Revelation i. 14), and he " sits on the throne of his glory, and all evil will pass away before his face " (cf. Matt. xxv. 31–46). The glory of the righteous and elect, and the terrible doom of the wicked, are set forth in language forestalling that of the Evangelists. Another pre-Christian Apocalyptic work, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, written almost entirely in the second century B.C., also anticipates much Gospel morality, and uses language similar to that of the New Testament.

" In Gnosticism," says the learned Professor W. Bousset in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, " the central object of worship is a redeemer-deity, who has *already* trodden the difficult way which the faithful have to follow." " The essential part " of most Gnostic conceptions " was already in existence and fully developed before Christianity." We all know that innumerable Saviour-gods figured in primitive religions, but the question arises whether, and to what extent, the redeeming god, or demigod, of Gnosticism can be identified with the Christian Redeemer. Many scholars of high repute—Sir Gilbert Murray, for example, Mr. J. M. Robertson, and numerous Continental professors—speak as though the identification were complete, or nearly so. They represent the Gospel Christ as a mystic Redeemer derived from, or at least a variant on, the Soters common to earlier faiths. But Mr. Edwyn Bevan, who also brings a first-class intellect and an incorruptible scholarship to bear on these difficult problems, combats this view with some force in chapter iv of his *Hellenism and Christianity*. He recognizes the resemblance between Christ, as a Revealer of the divine *gnosis*, and the inspired revealers of the mystery-sects. He also admits that " when the early preachers of Christianity explained the position of Jesus in the totality of things, they did so in terms which bore a close resemblance to conceptions already current in the heathen and Jewish worlds " ; but he argues that the Gnostic Soter was merely prophet, not redeemer (surely a disputable proposition), and says that the importance of Christ lies in His personality

rather than in His message. The truth, perhaps, lies in the mean between these conflicting views. It may not be possible to establish complete identification between the Redeemer of the New Testament and the earlier Soters, but the points of contact and similarity are very remarkable. I should also like to draw attention to a point which I cannot find mentioned in other commentators—namely, that in the gnostical *Book of Enoch*, XLVIII and LI, it is expressly said that the righteous shall be saved through the Elect One or Son of Man. Surely this is investing him with the character of a redeemer. Even though some of the Gnostics undoubtedly borrowed from the Christian Church, as Mr. Bevan says they did, the authors of the *Book of Enoch* and other pre-Christian mystics could not have done so. The student must examine the facts for himself, and form his own judgment.

Many of the Gnostic theories, especially certain later varieties, will strike the general reader as "clotted nonsense," unintelligible verbiage, pomposity and puzzledom. Dean Inge's shrewd remark that the cult was "rotten before it was ripe" is largely true, but as a philosophic system it contained underlying notions which possess some permanent value. It is gnosis based on revelation and mythology, and the literature arising thereout: in its interpretation the allegorical method, so generally useful in explaining the inexplicable, has the time of its life. We meet once more the old mystical or metaphysical idea that God is above all thought, and therefore unknown, unknowable, and largely negative. He is the Pleroma, or Fullness, and from Him emanate a plurality of spiritual beings, a descending hierarchy of divinities called æons. The old Persian dualism of good and evil appears, the evil being inherent in matter, which is Satan's dominion, the good lying in the spirit which is divine. The main object of the Gnostic was salvation: like so many other religious people, he was chiefly concerned in saving his own skin in the world to come, and his intense dread of the after-life is still reflected in the gloom of our orthodox theology. This salvation could only be obtained by enlightenment, which comes down from God through the æons, and is then distributed by human hiero-

phants. This idea had long been anticipated in the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*. By that very ancient work the deceased was provided with spells, prayers, words of power, incantations, etc., whereby he could find his way through the horrible region of the *Tuat*—a sort of preliminary Hades, or Purgatory—into the Elysian Fields, there to revel in the blissful presence of Osiris.[1]

The Gnostics were tormented by the same old religious problems which baffle the thinkers of all ages, especially our own. How, and why, could a perfect God make and tolerate so imperfect a world as ours—the sort of world, for example, that we have lately been witnessing? Such a God, the Gnostic said, could not possibly exist; so he proceeded to fix the blame on an intermediary—an ingenious solution of the difficulty. Not God, but the Demiurge, was the person responsible. The Demiurge, a sort of Old Testament Creator God or Architect of the universe, was a simple Emanation. He created the "psychic" and animal souls who were under the power of the demons, and also the whole world of matter, subject to imperfection from its very nature, and in every way undesirable. Some sects went so far as to say that the sexual propagation of mankind was a crime in the sight of God, and the origin of evil. For a woman to bear children, and so perpetuate this very wicked world, was considered to be doing the work of the Demiurge, and exceedingly strong measures of birth-control were adopted by certain sectaries. Needless to say that "chastity" of this kind, like clerical celibacy in later ages, was productive of shocking and unnumbered evils.[2]

The æons, a reproduction of the planetary gods in Babylonian religion, were originally twelve in number—or rather there were twelve Great Æons identical, it would seem, with the Zodiac of fixed stars. The great Gnostic, Valentinus, taught that there were three principal Æons, or aspects of God forming the Pleroma, of whom one was Christ. There was also a very important female æon named Sophia, whose wild career is described in *Pistis Sophia* and other hermetic works. She

[1] Budge's *Egyptian Literature*, 40 sq.
[2] King's *Gnostics and their Remains*, p. 335.

appears throughout Gnostic literature in various guises. In one of her aspects she is a species of Logos, a goddess of Divine Reason or Wisdom, and there were certain Gnostics who wanted to have her enrolled as the Third Person of the Christian Trinity. The ecclesiastics, however, were anti-feminist, and vetoed the proposal. The Virgin of Light, Sophia was also the working agent throughout in the salvation of mankind,[1] and generally played an important part in the destiny of the human race. As the great Mother of Life, she is said to have affinities with the Semitic goddess Ishtar, or Astarte; and, like Isis, "the Great Lady and Mother of the God," she is regarded as a prototype of the Virgin Mary as worshipped in after days. On the other hand, it is a regrettable fact that her devotees and chroniclers, while professing a profound veneration for her divinity, did not scruple to blacken her character. Her unbridled passions, they tell us, brought about the creation of the universe, and also caused her to produce a large variety of most undesirable offspring[2]—sometimes, as is recorded in certain legends, without male assistance. These goings-on created great alarm among the other members of the Pleroma, who feared that their own morality might be affected: she was excluded from the society of the Twelve Great Æons, the Upper Ten of celestial circles, and had to put up with the Thirteenth in a lower sphere. Here the Soter (Saviour) found her in great distress and weeping bitterly.[3] He took pity on her, raised her up and comforted her, and, after a variety of adventures which are recorded in a rather tedious narrative,[4] eventually married her. The fruit of their union was not inconsiderable: she bore him seventy sons.[5]

Another female æon of somewhat tarnished reputation was Ennoia, or Intelligence, about whom the tongue of Gnostic

[1] Legge, ii. 158.

[2] Legge, ii. 104, 46; Sadler's *Behind the New Testament*, p. 50.

[3] *Gnostics and their Remains*, p. 15.

[4] Through a great part of the *Pistis Sophia* story Mary Magdalene is the chief speaker. She was highly commended for her spiritual knowledge, but had on one occasion to be sharply rebuked by St. Peter for talking so much, and not giving the *men* a chance to speak (ibid.)!

[5] *Encyclopædia Britannica*, art. "Gnosticism," by Professor William Bousset.

celestial gossip wagged freely. We learn from Simon Magus, on the rather questionable authority of Hippolytus and Irenæus, that her beauty seduced the world-making angels. They caused her to enter one body after another, including that of Helen of Troy, and compelled her to remain down below to minister to their sensual desires, but afterwards redeemed her. This deplorable behaviour on the part of Ennoia and the creative æons is chronicled with gusto by Epiphanius; but Mr. Legge (i. 193) thinks that the Fathers (like their successors in theological controversy) travestied their opponents' teaching, and misrepresented Simon Magus. There was yet another remarkable æon who was the fruit of a projection by Bythos, "the Ineffable One," in the Ophite and Valentinian systems. This æon was oddly called Horos, "the Limit," by a sort of pun which Mr. Legge (ii. 105) says will be familiar to all Egyptologists: he formed a guard and circumvallation for the Æons. He was also named "the Cross" (Σταῦρος). But enough of the æons and their eccentric proceedings: let us return to more sensible doctrines.

One really important school of Gnostic thought was that of the Docetics. They held that Jesus was a purely mystical Figure who appeared on earth, not as a real man, but only as a phantom or illusion in the form of a man, and that He did not really suffer on a physical cross. This theory reappears continually throughout the history of religious controversy, and it is by no means dead yet. It is admitted, as we have seen, that Christianity is still permeated with Gnostic theory. Christianity and later Gnosticism both grew at the same time and under the same intellectual amd spiritual conditions; and "Christians are confronted to-day with a formidable body of opinion which actually maintains that a great part of Christian belief was formed of notions (already) current in the Hellenistic world." [1] The Docetic theory is plainly referred to with disapprobation in 2 John 7, but some people contend that warrant is found for it in other passages of Scripture. Primitive Christianity, they argue, was in no way a dogmatic religion, but a way of living, a moral mystery-religion; and the

[1] Bevan's *Hellenism and Christianity*, p. 83.

early Christians formed a mystery-group meeting in secret and having an inner and outer circle (Mark iv. 10–13; Matt. xiii. 11–17, 26–27). Christ was the Gnostic saviour-god, a spirit, the Logos and Idea of the Universe, who preached righteousness and union with the Divine. The Epistles attributed to St. Paul, they say, explain and enlarge these ideas. The Apostle is described by Mr. T. Whittaker, in his *Origins of Christianity*, as the father of Christian Gnosticism; and Dean Inge (*Christian Mysticism*, p. 69) says that all the essentials of mysticism are found in his Epistles. His alleged writings are certainly full of Gnostic words and phrases, such as "archons," "Prince of the power of the air," "Pleroma," "ectroma," etc. He preached the mystery and the "hidden wisdom" of God to those who were "initiated" (the word τέλειοι in 1 Cor. ii. 2–6 is wrongly translated as "perfect" in our Authorised Version), and the Jesus he taught (it is said) was Kyrios Christos, the Lord Christ who represented the Jewish Adonai, and the Church was the mystical body of Christ. The great Biblical scholar, M. A. Loisy, enlarges on these points in his work, *Les Mystères Paiens et le Mystère Chrétien*. St. Paul, he maintains, insisted on the mystical element in Christianity, and, by completely "transforming" it into a Mystery-Religion, saved it from the utter collapse that would otherwise inevitably have overtaken it. Other authorities, however, maintain that the mysterious element was already present in the religion before St. Paul's conversion. In any case the Mystery-Christ, the mystic eternal divine Figure, which had already appeared in Jewish Apocalyptic literature, was perpetuated. He is conceived of as a divinity, somewhat like the Gnostic Primal Man, who was metamorphosed into a human being in the regular mythological manner. St. Paul, like the Gnostic Basilides, says (Phil. ii. 6) that Christ came to earth "in the similitude of a man," [1] and other passages are cited to

[1] It is noteworthy that the orthodox Bishop Lightfoot, in his commentary on this passage, says that the word ὁμοιώματι (in the similitude) "does not imply the reality of our Lord's humanity," and he points out that other expressions used by St. Paul are "all expressions implying external semblance." The deductions drawn from these verses, and from Dr. Lightfoot's commentary thereon, may, of course, be pressed too far.

prove that the Apostle—the one distinctive figure standing forth sharply and clearly amid the mists in which the primitive religion is enveloped—had definite leanings towards Docetism.

Such, in very brief outline, are some of the principal arguments adduced by the higher criticism in support of its innovating contentions. The whole subject is an extremely difficult one, and still remains involved in the deepest obscurity. The earnest inquirer who really desires the truth must reject the " dead hand of authority," and form his own conclusions. We can only affirm that the knowledge so far at our command affords not the slightest warrant for the pretensions of clerical absolutism, or for dogmatic statement on either side.

CHAPTER X

THE DRY-ROT OF ASCETICISM

In the third century the Church found herself engaged in a life-and-death struggle with the "heresy" whose fantastic doctrines we have just been investigating. An authoritative priesthood in the service of an absolutist Church had determined to assert itself. It saw clearly that it could not exist side by side with cults which allowed every man to have his own opinions, made the heart's convictions a test of truth, and dispensed with the ordained minister as official and indispensable mediator. At all costs the prophet must be compelled to make way for the priest; the only recognized authority was that of ecclesiasticism and tradition, and the sacraments "became the indispensable rites by which divine grace was believed to be mysteriously and magically conveyed."[1] Coincidently, however, a far higher type of mysticism than that of the sacramentalist was instilled into the religion by a limited number of illustrious contemplatives.

Nevertheless, though Gnosticism was vanquished in the fight, its influences remained almost unimpaired, and it continued to form a connecting link between Paganism and Christianity. The Church, like other sagacious conquerors, has always known how to make use of her adversaries' weapons; and Mr. Legge tells us how she "profoundly modified her own methods in the directions which the experience of the Gnostics had shown to be profitable. The fear of hell came to occupy a larger and larger part in her exhortations, and apocalypse after apocalypse was put forth in which its terrors were set out in abundant detail."[2] The basis of Gnostic morality was asceti-

[1] *Studies in Mystical Religion*, by the Rev. Rufus Jones, p. 28.
[2] Legge, ii. 201.

cism. In order to escape from evil matter, and to save one's soul in the world to come, it was considered desirable—nay, necessary—to mortify the flesh and severely punish the body. Catholicism incorporated these theories in its system *en bloc*: they did not originate in Gnosticism, but their varied sources were entirely Pagan. Asceticism is a universal and (as it always seems to me) a necessary concomitant of mysticism; and the Christianity of the Cloister, or "the life of the shell-fish," is rightly regarded as owing its parentage to mystical religion of this type. It was the monastic spirit, the spirit of ascetism rendered subservient to clerical uses, that informed the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages. It began with the idea of purgation, the belief that the disciplining of self by nullifying our corporeal part, would aid mankind in its effort to achieve union with the Divine, but it degenerated only too often into monkery of a more or less repulsive kind. For a long time it assumed the proportions and character of an epidemic. Social and civic duties were regarded as a hindrance to the soul's development; all energy, good and bad alike, was suppressed as an impulse of the Devil. Any feeling of reasonable satisfaction that you are doing some good in the world must be flogged out of the system as an exhibition of evil pride. Life is a disease of the spirit; like Plotinus, the mystic should be "ashamed of his body," and war must be waged against the natural man. The "ungodly chastity" of compulsory celibacy was represented as the ideal state; marriage was a kind of sin, and children a burden perilous to faith. The canonized Madame de Chantal, following the direction of her beloved confessor, St. François de Sales, "passed over the body of her father and son" (who, they say, stretched himself out on the threshold to prevent her passing) in order to take the veil. Her father gave his permission, in a letter blotted all over with his tears—and died, grief-stricken, the following year.[1]

Blessed Angela of Foligno, "a genuine daughter of St. Francis," congratulated herself on the deaths of her mother, husband, and children, "who were great hindrances in the way

[1] Michelet's *Priests, Women, and Families* (translated by C. Cocks, p. 28).

of God."[1] Instead of looking after her family, she and a sister ascetic washed the feet of female paupers and the hands of a leper in an advanced stage of the disease. She also tells us that, when the washing was finished, they both drank the water with immense gusto.[2] Her ideal was to render herself as "dead and putrid" into the hands of the Lord.

"Ah, my friend," said the great German mystic, Tauler, "what hath thy poor body done to thee, that thou shouldest so torment it? Oh folly! mortify and slay thy sins, not thine own flesh and blood."[3] And he went on to expose the error of those who undergo great austerities in order to be thought holy—suffering for their own glory rather than for that of God. He would tap the goitre of monastic selfishness, a form of egoistic individualism which is the negation of true Catholicity: he saw that the anchorite's dreams, born of ecstasy self-torment, are but the counterfeits of the unseen oracle on high. The soul "sobs itself out," and pain is made an essential part of the conscious life. The wise man, on the other hand, laughs at life and its adventures: he does not attempt to escape from them. Cloistered virtue is not virtue at all. The self-torturing saint is crucifying himself, not for the sake of humanity, but to gain some illusory benefit for himself. "My road is the road of pain," said a well-known Jesuit—a really fine character—who was killed while nobly doing his duty at the fourth battle of Ypres; and he proceeded to act on this supposition by flogging himself with a "discipline" of safety-razor blades, and mutilating himself in other ways, fondly imagining that his worth was measured by the poignancy of his sufferings.[4] He committed the mistake common to nearly

[1] Inge's *Christian Mysticism*, p. 97. So, after his conversion, did Cardinal Manning regard his wife's death as one of "God's special mercies."

[2] "Tantam autem dulcedinem sensimus in illo potu, quod per totam viam venimus in magnâ suavitate, et videbatur mihi per omnia quod ego gustâssem mirabilem dulcedinem, quantum ad suavitatem quam ibi inveni." I forbear from inflicting on the reader the remainder of Angela's narrative: it is to be found in Vaughan's *Hours with the Mystics*, i. 362.

[3] Ibid., i. 251 sq.

[4] I possess a catalogue, issued by a well-known firm of Roman Catholic booksellers, of penitentiary articles which they have on sale. One, a small steel cat-o'-nine-tails, with sharp points, is a most formidable weapon. I have

all mystics, that of identifying his own ideas with the mind of God. The anchorite who withdraws from the world says he does it for the sake of God and to please Christ. How does he know that Christ is pleased by a man abandoning family and civic duties, making himself a perfectly useless member of society, to save his own soul? How, in like manner, did the Jesuit know that the road of needless and self-inflicted pain was the road which God had told him to follow? Wholesome restraint, such as abstinence from alcohol and narcotics, is a totally different thing from the asceticism which impairs the vital forces. You do not liberate the soul by scarifying your back, or cast off the burden of sin by merely making yourself thoroughly uncomfortable. Let us control our desires by all means, but there is no reason why we should try to annihilate them or suppose that the supernatural is always, and of necessity, at war with the natural.

The most convincing defence, perhaps, of the ascetic ideal is that supplied by a monkish chronicler who had a firm belief that by fasting a man could become better united with the Divine. "It is a principle with geometers," this worthy sage observes, "that a round body can never touch a plane except at one point. . . . A belly too well filled becomes round, it cannot touch God except at one point; but fasting flattens the belly until it is united with the surface of God at all points." [1]

"Mysticism," says Dean Inge, "enjoins a dying life, not a living death." But, surely, this rather unfortunate phrase constitutes a grave indictment of mysticism, and is at variance

tried it on my own person, and can testify to its efficacy; its price is only seven and sixpence. It is stated, on the authority of a salesman, that Ritualists buy three times as many of these instruments of torture as Papists. Anglo-Catholicism is also now busy promoting the mediæval ideal of virginity. Extremists even go so far as to speak of a married priest as a man who "keeps a woman"—just as Roman priests refer, in vilely insulting terms, to decent women who were not married in Romanist churches as harlots, concubines, or adulteresses. It has lately been suggested that there should be formed an Anglo-Catholic Order of Merit for women, consisting of two classes—(1) for ladies who have refused to marry a priest, and (2) for those who would refuse a priest's offer of marriage if it were made (*The Spectator*, December 22, 1923). The consecrated priest who lives "in open matrimony" is a scandal in Catholic eyes.

[1] Brady's *Clavis Calendaria*, cited in Cohen's *Religion and Sex*, p. 64.

with the Dean's opinions which he expresses elsewhere. We moderns (including, I think, Dean Inge himself) much prefer a life that is active, fresh, and vigorous, to a thing palsied with an artificially induced inanition. Detachment from earthly ties, the piling up of sensuous experience by means of trance and reverie, isolated contemplation, renunciation of natural powers and faculties—all these things are but a "gluttony of the soul," a form of spiritual self-indulgence. The self-abasement which is the note of all mystical religions does not raise a man in the scale of creation, or save him from temptation. The terrible temptations which beset Christian and Buddhist saints do not appear to have been abated by their austerities. Penitential discipline, instead of providing them with a coat of mail against the attacks of sensuality, would rather seem to have increased them.[1] If you keep on telling a man that he is a miserable and depraved worm, he will probably —if he believes you—end by behaving like one. While we are in the world it is surely our duty to make the best of it: there is no good authority for the supposition that St. Peter only unlocks the gates of heaven to those who shut behind them the door that opens on to this life.

The rhapsodists who extol the asceticism of negation and repression, which is the staple food of the visionary's life, slur over these important considerations. We are not responsible for the fashioning of our bodies, so we have no need to be ashamed of them or to punish them for being what they are. Let us rid ourselves of the notion that suffering, rather than happiness, is the path to perfection, or that the soul improves under the lash. The self-vilification and the infliction of pain, which are so edifying to fanatics, are no more reasonable than the horror of natural desires and functions. Religious young people of both sexes often have a morbid terror of their developing sexuality. This is neither sensible nor wholesome: if they had been properly instructed in these matters it would not have occurred. That very wise person, Plutarch, protested

[1] The trials of St. Antony were probably light compared with the distress of that unfortunate Buddhist hermit whose dreams were continually disturbed by the importunities of five hundred pink-footed nymphs.

against the incantations, abject penitence, and fatuous self-accusations of the over-zealous pietist: he said that it is this sort of thing, coupled with "unclean purifications, filthy cleansings, barbarous and outrageous penances in sanctuaries, and bemirings," which makes men atheists.[1] But there still exists a strange faith in the purgative efficacy of dirt, which is merely a late survival of primitive savageries. Count von Hoensbroech enlarges on this topic in his illuminating book, *Fourteen Years a Jesuit*, i. p. 392. He tells us how, during his novitiate, those Jesuits were held up as models for imitation who never had a bath and did not remove vermin from their bodies. The Count himself suffered intensely from fleas while he was an inmate of the novitiate house. "When the plague grew too bad a notice was put upon the board of the scholasticate or novitiate, *Hora* 10, *venatio pulicum* (Flea-hunt at 10 o'clock)." The bag was usually pretty large. St. François de Sales bade poor Madame de Chantal to flog the "she-ass" of sensual desire; and the Jesuits of former days, as they whacked their "resisting asses' flesh" (*carnem suam asinam*), exclaimed, "Cease, O insolent ass, to revolt against your mistress Reason."[2]

Unsectarian opinion is pretty well agreed that Christianity —by which I here mean the religion of Christ converted into Churchianity—ushered in a very long period notorious for its intellectual decadence. How far ecclesiasticism was to blame is, of course, a moot point; but we cannot get over the fact that the human mind all through this period was working in chains, in an atmosphere and under restrictions that were fatal to human development. Mr. Bevan, who certainly is no iconoclast, pictures Plato and Aristotle, "if they had been confronted with their Christian descendants, brushing away a mass of ecclesiastical cobwebs with an unsparing hand and recalling thought to the broad basal facts of reality." The Dark Ages may not have been so dark as they are sometimes painted, but the best opinion holds that they were very dark indeed—

[1] Quoted at greater length in Miss Harrison's *Prolegomena*, etc., p. 516.

[2] *Fourteen Years a Jesuit*, i. 388; Michelet's *Priests, Women, and Families*, translated by C. Cocks, p. 22.

and almost as dirty as they were dark—and for this the spirit of asceticism was largely responsible.

The monastic system undoubtedly bestowed some benefits on a world that was then in a very miserable state. It was the centre of such scanty learning as existed; it bestowed charity and furnished other palliatives for crying evils; but more than this cannot be said. It never went to the root of the mischief, or sought radically effective cures for deep-seated disease, and the harm it did far outweighed the good. Thousands of capable citizens, more concerned for their individual salvation than for the general weal, retired into a seclusion of usually barren indolence varied by unprofitable self-mortification. Vital problems of philosophy and life were abandoned for useless theological speculations and religious exercises. "In the agony of ancient civilization," says Mr. Bevan, "to be stationary seemed to be an achievement": the supreme task was to preserve as far as possible ancient traditions. "The minds at work upon the matter of life had not the same elasticity and liberty of movement as the minds which, in the fourth century B.C., had been brought to play upon the experience, poorer in this particular, of the ancient Athenian." The Church was not the only culprit, but the fact remains that she assisted, instead of opposing, the forces making for retrogression. The human spirit was rigidly confined, science remorselessly hunted down, by ecclesiastical tradition and authority. The vast majority of the clergy could neither read nor write, and the appalling meagreness of Europe's literature, from the fifth to the twelfth centuries, reflects the general standard of culture. Pope Gregory the Great was appalled and scandalized by the "execrable" conduct of a Gallic bishop who promoted culture by "teaching grammar to some." The episcopal grammarian was told that he was doing "a thing that cannot be repeated without a feeling of shame," and he was sternly admonished not to do it again.[1] Eight centuries later the Church was still prohibiting the lay physician to practise without clerical permission, because "disease was commonly due to sin." In

[1] *The Bible in Europe*, by Joseph McCabe, ch. ii—an excellent sketch of the period.

1391 a bold and enlightened monarch " gave the medical faculty permission to dissect one dead criminal in three years," but the ecclesiastics raised a terrible hubbub, and for years dissection was prevented and the dissector outlawed. Dirt and magic were the favourite remedies: broken bones were treated with ordure, poisoning with the breath of a donkey.[1] Down to the nineteenth century the Church canonized or beatified holy men whose chief claim to the honour was the cultivation of a filthy ascetism by way of penance, the renunciation of natural affections, and the contemptuous ignoring of civic duties. The Christian world, in Lecky's words, showed " a condition of depravity, and especially of degradation, which has seldom been surpassed." In a word, theology, dominated by the ascetic ideal, " numbed and paralysed the intellect of Europe " during a period which was " one of the most deplorable in the history of the human mind."

Monks, as we know, have always been the cruellest persecutors and the most unbridled fanatics, the " hounds of God " who hunted the heretic quarry to its doom. It was they who tore to pieces the cultured Hypatia, burned libraries, and destroyed the treasures of art; and St. Augustine, who in his early days favoured the ascetic life, learned wisdom later and penned a vigorous indictment of monachism. In our day there have always been a few enlightened Catholics, such as Father Tyrrell, who recognize that asceticism, which seeks to shelter the soul from the tyranny of the external world by selfish isolation, is but a perversion of true mysticism. But Rome was not slow to discover that vagaries of this kind might be made the means of carrying out her schemes and bringing grist to her mills. She paraded the miseries, mental and bodily, which morbid devotion, under her instructions, inflicted on itself. The visionaries, with their strange performances, mutilated faculties, and futile disinterestedness, were held up—in many cases by ecclesiastics, who, far from being ascetic, " did themselves " exceedingly well—as a pattern to all men: their incoherent ravings were represented as the utterances of the unutterable. They allowed themselves, with perfect willingness, to be made

[1] *The Bible in Europe*, chap. iv.

the tools of clerical ambition—became without a murmur the performing dogs, as it were, of the pietistic circus.

Meanwhile certain great architects were at work building up a fabric of monastic rule, and forging fresh chains for the human spirit. The genius of St. Bernard laid deep and sure the foundations of the Cloister; but, as Vaughan finely says, his successes "proved eventually the disasters of Christendom. One of the best of men made plain the way for some of the worst." His remedy for the ills of life was probably worse than the disease, but his successors repeated it in larger doses and with still more calamitous results. To win recruits for the cloister was to win souls for Christ: the monastic life being the one thing needful, there could not be too many monasteries. The world was depopulated of its best in order to minister to the needs and the tender mercies of a cruel asceticism whose favourite subject of contemplation was worms and decomposition.

The idea spread and, as the years went on, the murrain among the human cattle became epidemic. Then came that great but gentle soul, St. Francis of Assisi. For two years, we are told, he "lay sick under the preparatory miseries"; while other saints endured the "sweet agony" and "delicious torment" of rapture, besides being harassed at intervals by devils. St. Francis entered on the ascetic life with all the fervour of his ardent nature: he and his companions craved of Innocent III the privilege of leading it. The boon was granted—with the reservation, however, that the Church was to be their supreme authority.[1] They little knew, good simple souls, what this reservation portended. Orders were created, one after another, and the people flocked to be enrolled. But the Church would not suffer a movement that was outside the scheme of her universal domination, and the clerics took effective measures to control it. "It was done with velvet gloves," says Mr. Jones, "but Francis felt the cold steel beneath the gloves." When the poor Saint awoke to the realities of the situation, and found that his brotherhood had been converted into an ordinary Papal organization, he retired

[1] *Studies in Mystical Religion*, by the Rev. R. Jones, p. 158.

to pray. But the mischief had been done, and the germs of demoralization were actively at work. "Francis was hardly in his grave before the influences of a degenerate Church began to work degeneration of the Order." In twenty years' time the fraternities had become sunk in the lowest vice and the vilest corruption, and the work of their great founder had perished, in a spiritual sense, within a generation. Only the personality of the man, the splendid example he set, the nobility of his life and character remain for us an undying memory, an inspiration for the men and women of all time: but the organizations he spent his life-force in creating were fundamentally unsound, and rotted to their inevitable doom. Another good man had suffered defeat in the campaign against healthy human instincts, and excellent intentions at war with the facts of life had paved the way to ruin.

CHAPTER XI

THE LOGOS

Among the fundamental ideas shared by all the great mystical religions, to which allusion has been made in the preceding chapters, must be reckoned that of the Logos, the Spirit of Wisdom or Reason, the creative Word made flesh, interpreting minister and mediating agency between the gods and mankind. From another point of view the Logos is also a sort of pantheistic *anima mundi* (or soul of the universe) and cosmic principle, who emerges in later and more developed systems of theology as a divine Personality, the vicegerent and ambassador of God. The unknown writer of the Fourth Gospel[1]—which Dean Inge suggestively terms "the charter of Christian mysticism"—is commonly supposed to have derived his idea of "the Word" from the Alexandrian Philo, a Hellenistic Jew who was a contemporary of Christ's but about twenty-five years older. There are, however, many other and much earlier sources of information upon which the Evangelist might have drawn for his theory of the Logos. The conception of divinity, in certain of its aspects, as the wisdom of God is a very ancient and, as I have said, a fairly general one. Almost everywhere throughout history we find a Logos at work training mankind with a view to their higher development, but the limited space at my disposal compels me to confine myself to a brief sketch of the more salient examples.

In Greek philosophy the first clear exposition of the Logos theory appears in that really profound thinker, Heraclitus.

[1] I received a severe "slating" from religious journals, Protestant as well as Roman Catholic, for stating in *Priestcraft* that St. John was not the author of the Gospel which bears his name; but the great bulk of impartial scholarship, the opinion that really counts, has for years accepted this view (see the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, art. "John, Son of Zebedee").

He asserted that the whole world of matter was the work of the Logos, or, as he called it, the Mind-Spirit, which was inherent in it and gave system and order to its processes. Strife, in his opinion, was the agent employed by the Logos: if things did not continually sunder into contrarieties which oppose each other, and supplant one another, all actuality and life would cease and decease.[1] Strife, in fact, was the "father of all things"; and the Roman Church, in like manner, while believing in the Logos, has a still firmer faith in the efficacy of strife. The Nous-Logos (Mind-Spirit) of Heraclitus was identified by some Christian writers with the Logos of the Gospel attributed to St. John: the not dissimilar theories of Plato, Aristotle, and other thinkers of old times may be found in various works dealing with philosophy. Plato, in particular, was regarded by some of the early Fathers as "a Christian before Christ," a prophet who anticipated Christian doctrine centuries before Jesus was born; and dozens of purely Aristotelian notions were incorporated in Christian doctrine by St. Thomas Aquinas and his brother Scholastics. In the third century A.D., Plotinus, theosophizing Plato, effected sundry modifications, derived from Egyptian and other Eastern occultism, of these Greek theories, which afterwards filtered through "Dionysius" into the established religion. Plotinus had a Trinity of the Good, the Intelligent (a species of Nous-Logos), and the Soul—a triad otherwise expressed by St. Augustine as the Good, the True, and the Beautiful. The Logos also appears in the Intelligence of Dionysius, whose influence is by no means extinct in these days: "the fire still burns" on his altars.

Reverting to ancient faiths, we find the Logos represented in Egypt, especially in the later amalgam of Hellenic and Egyptian mythology, by the god Thoth, the "righteous judge" and personification of the Creator's mind and powers,[2] who instructed mankind in the art of writing and language. He was a member of the trinity in unity of Tum, Horus, and Thoth. In the more ancient Egyptian cosmogony the Divinity

[1] Schwegler's *History of Philosophy*, p. 21.
[2] Budge's *History of the Egyptian People*, p. 170.

" first *thinks*, and then *utters* the world " ; and the Word, who was the instrument in the creation of the universe, is Thoth. The Hindu *gnosis* is credited by many people with being the parent of most Oriental religions, and in many theologies we find the Logos described as the Word, the Only-Begotten, First-Born, Son of God, etc. In Greece we have Hermes the messenger, and Apollo the oracle, of divine wisdom. In Persia Mithra is described as " the Holy Word " ; and a holy priest, who is " the Word Incarnate," offers up sacrifice to him.[1] His absorption of the Logos in himself is said to be traceable to Babylonian sources. Ormuzd, the King of Light, " First-born of Boundless Time," created by means of his " Word " the pure world of which he is preserver and judge.[2] Mithra was the Logos incarnate, and also a Redeemer-Logos. In China the conception of " an all-pervading and primordial Reason " (Tao or Tau) was set forth explicitly, together with a doctrine of a unity and trinity of all forms of existence, by Lao-tse in the sixth century before our era. Mr. F. J. Gould tells us in his *Concise History of Religion*, p. 99, that images of the Three Pure Ones, Non-being (chaos), Being or the Divine Logos, and the Incarnate God may still be seen and worshipped in the Taouist temples of China. The celestial Sarasvati, the voice of Brahma, and the eternal speech-principle of the Veda, represent the Logos in India.

The Jewish notion of the Word may be found all over Apocalyptic and more ancient Hebrew literature. Mr. Robertson thinks that they derived it from the Babylonian lore in which were " accumulated the current fancies of thousands of years of Asiatic speculation, including that of the ancient civilization from which was derived that of the Chinese." In Assyria the god Nebo had many attributes of the Logos ; " wisdom and the Life-giving principle " were associated with certain Babylonian divinities, and described as First-born, Only-Begotten. The Logos appearing as " cosmic egg," or in other creative forms, is to be found in faiths too numerous to mention here ; and the notion of the Supreme Light, or Treasure of Light,

[1] *Pagan Christs*, pp. 289, 314.
[2] *Gnostics and their Remains*, p. 29.

which is partially diffused among mankind, exists in many religious systems. The dove, as we gather from several passages in Philo, was the recognized symbol of the Logos among the Alexandrian Jews of his time. It was also the emblem of the pre-Christian goddess Astarte, "the mother of all living." Agni, the Indian "Mouth of the Gods," was typified by a dove; and the Egyptian Amun, as the spirit of life, was represented as a bird hovering above the body of Osiris.[1]

The doctrine of the Logos is more fully discussed, perhaps, in the writings of Philo Judæus than in those of any other pre-Christian author. Modernist theologians seem to be in accord with thinkers of a still more advanced type that in his writings we have the key to the Logos theory which is embodied in the Fourth Gospel. His main ideas are of Greek origin, but the phraseology is largely that of Jewish Apocalyptic literature. He "wrote probably shortly after the birth of Christ,"[2] and the contention that he derived his notions from association with Christians is not regarded seriously by impartial scholars. His object was to reconcile Hellenism and Judæism, Greek philosophy and Hebrew religion. Plato, for him, was "the Attic Moses," but, as Vaughan says, he belonged less to Jerusalem than to Athens. He was in some sort the intellectual father of the Neo-Platonists, "the first meeting-place of the waters of the Eastern and the Western theosophies." He was the founder, in short, of a new, mystical Judæo-Hellenic philosophy which was improved and expanded by his Neo-Platonic successors; and "the ecstasy of Plotinus is the development of Philo's intuition."[3]

In the theory of Philo the Logos was not God, only the mind or reflection of God; but the notion of the Word as cosmic principle, creator and sustainer of all life, is developed, if it did not originate, in his works. To set forth in detail his elaborate, confused, and sometimes highly inconsistent expositions of these metaphysical doctrines would require a whole volume, but Mr. Robertson (*Pagan Christs*, p. 224) has given

[1] See Legge, ii. 135; *Pagan Christs*, pp. 92, 223, 290.
[2] Legge, i. 174.
[3] Vaughan's *Hours with the Mystics*, i. 65.

us, with references, a useful list of the terms Philo employs to describe the Logos and his attributes. He is the Son of Man, second divinity, first-begotten and well-beloved Son of God, the Light of the World, free from all taint of sin, protector of the imperfect and weak, Advocate for man, Shepherd of God's flock; physician who heals all evil, gives heavenly food to all who seek it and freedom to those who forsake sin, and raises the just to the presence of the Creator; the true High Priest, Word, and Mediator.[1] "We are all sons of one Man," he said, of "an immortal Sire, the Man of God, who, being Reason (Logos) of the Eternal, is of necessity himself eternal." He also speaks of God as "the Saviour," and adopts those Platonic theories which some of the Fathers regarded as Christianity before Christ.

Most of these ideas and phrases, if not all of them, are to be found in earlier Apocalyptic Jewish literature, so it is useless to pretend that they were derived from Christians. The philosophy of Philo was a partial synthesis of views current among the Hellenizing Jews and other sects that congregated in, and before, his time along the Eastern shores of the Mediterranean. An immense number of Hebrews—some writers say that there were a million of them—lived in or near Alexandria, which was the centre of Levantine learning. Their hazy notions, drawn from a hundred sources, were part of the mental habit of the time, and finally became crystallized in the form of dogmatic religion. The teachers of philosophy found in them eager scholars who incorporated in their own systems of thought such Greek theories as were compatible with Hebrew traditions. Philo's doctrine was a case in point. Moses was his prophet, but Plato proved a more alluring study: to justify his departures from Hebrew orthodoxy he made free use of that unfailing expedient, the allegorical method. God, he said, is undefinable and, being absolutely perfect, cannot come in contact with matter. His dealings with it must, therefore, be conducted through intermediate beings, who are inconsistently figured as independent powers or attributes of

[1] See also Dean Inge's *Christian Mysticism*, p. 84; and the Rev. G. T. Sadler's *Behind the New Testament*, p. 21.

God.[1] "All the Divine Powers are summed up in the Logos or Word of God, who is not only their chief, but their source, and the great intermediary between God and the universe." In a word, the Logos was enthroned in the celestial Olympus as King and Creator of the sum of things; and he has reigned in that capacity until this day.

[1] Legge, i. 174; *Christian Mysticism*, p. 83.

CHAPTER XII

THE LOGOS AT NICÆA

VIEWING the whole matter in the light of our later knowledge, it seems difficult to resist the conclusion that the author of the Fourth Gospel—whoever he may have been—by identifying Christ (probably to the surprise of many earnest Christians of his time) with the Alexandrian Logos, was importing doctrine foreign to the simplicity of Christ's teaching as reported in the earlier Gospels. There is no allusion to the Word, or Logos, in the Synoptics, the Epistles, or—directly, at any rate—in the Old Testament.[1] The word "Logos," says Dean Inge, "does not occur in any of the discourses"; and the Dean goes on to point out that "The identification of Christ with the 'Word' or 'Reason' of the philosophers is St. John's own."[2] The significance of this admission seems to me very great. We are not surprised to learn that St. Clement of Alexandria regarded the Gospel as "perfected Platonism," and that the Pagans persistently repeated the charge that Christ borrowed from Plato.[3] Mr. Bevan, too, has some suggestive remarks on the Fourth Gospel, and its rather startling incorporation of the Logos theory. "We may well believe," he says, "that when that book began to circulate, aged saints who unrolled it for the first time may have asked rather dubiously whence it came, and whether the words written in it were ever actually spoken by 'the Lord.' If so, their state of mind at that moment with regard to the new book must have resembled curiously that in which some good people find themselves again after eighteen hundred years."[4]

[1] A possible exception is Prov. iii. 19.
[2] *Christian Mysticism*, p. 46.
[3] Ibid., p. 78.
[4] *Hellenism and Christianity*, p. 65.

It will be seen, therefore, that this remarkable and fascinating document, so beautiful in the elevated simplicity of its style, so touching in the narrative it unfolds—"the brightest jewel in the Bible," if we may believe the Dean of St. Paul's—opened up a fertile field for ecclesiastical controversy. The problems it raised, directly or indirectly, greatly agitated the early Church, and were debated by her ablest theologians with a keenness and an acrimony which has rarely been surpassed. The number and complexity of these problems baffled the keenest intellects. Even the great St. Athanasius himself, subtlest of dialecticians, when he came to meditate on the Logos, confessed that the more he thought the less he comprehended, and that he was unable to express such thoughts as his brain formulated. To some people it may appear that the fog in the Saint's mind has permeated that much-discussed Creed of which he was the distinguished author. A good many of us in these days have shared his perplexities: we find, as Gibbon dryly observes,[1] that "the incomprehensible mystery which excites our adoration eludes our inquiry."

A fundamental principle of Platonic theology having received divine sanction in the sublimest of the Gospels, and the name and attributes of the Logos having been confirmed by the author of that work, the public mind, lay as well as clerical, was greatly agitated by questions concerning the nature, generation, and qualities of the three Persons composing the Trinity. The Logos having been revealed as a sacred object of faith, interest naturally centred round the Second Person, who had been identified by the greatest of the Evangelists with the Word. Was the Logos a person, or only an attribute? Had he an independent existence, or was he merely a spontaneous and dependent production of the Father's will? Had he an existence anterior to all created things, or was he generated in time? Was he of identical (*homoousion*) or only similar (*homoiousion*) substance with the Father? Did the Holy Ghost proceed from the Father and the Son, or from the Father only? Over these challenging problems, and others of a no less knotty nature, pious men wrangled and broke one

[1] *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ch. xxi.

another's heads for hundreds of years with a vigour and persistency which extort our admiration, though it must be confessed that the results attained seem hardly commensurate with so vast an expenditure of anger, energy, and ink.

Controversy reached its climax in the beginning of the fourth century, when matters were brought to a head by the great heresy of Arius and his disciples, who denied the proper deity of Christ. Prominent among the latter was Eusebius of Nicomedia, a sagacious ecclesiastic who had, as Gibbon says, "acquired the reputation of a statesman without forfeiting that of a saint." Their views on the subject of the Logos, added to their denial of Christ's divinity, were things that no orthodox person could possibly tolerate; and the *odium theologicum* raged like a pestilence. Political ambition cloaked (as usual) by the show of religion fanned the flames of strife, and faction joined hands with fanaticism in creating a great disturbance. In some cities there was serious disorder, not unaccompanied with violence. Alexandria, the principal home of the Logos and its admirers, was a natural centre of active strife. Virgins, we are told, were insulted and scourged in that chosen home of learning, and monks were trodden under foot. Elsewhere bishops caused their opponents to be exiled or put to death—one of them laid a plot to involve a rival in a charge of incontinence—and otherwise behaved in a most improper and unepiscopal manner. Arians were accused by the orthodox of heresy, of "offering night and day outrages against Christ, and against their bishop"; and they retaliated in kind. Alexander, Bishop of Constantinople, complained that they excited persecutions against the orthodox by means of "calumnious pamphlets written by disorderly women,"[1] and the wildest charges of personal misconduct on the part of saintly people were bruited abroad.[2]

With a view to stilling the tumult and, if possible, arriving at some conclusion, the wise Emperor Constantine, who had

[1] *Councils of the Church*, by Bishop Hefele, i. 250, 283; see also Bishop Kaye's *Council of Nicæa*, pp. 91, 103.

[2] I regret to see it stated that St. Athanasius was at one time falsely accused, among other things, "of causing other bishops to be scourged," and also of "violating a female."

recently granted full religious liberty to his subjects, summoned the famous Œcumenical Council of Nicæa in the year A.D. 325. Like Alexander the Great and Ptolemy in earlier ages, Constantine had conceived the idea of consolidating his dominions with the cement of religion, and he rightly regarded Christianity as the best material for the purpose. The Emperor was not himself technically, or probably even at heart, a Christian. He had not even been baptized or received into the Church;[1] and his attitude towards this particular dispute, and theological controversy in general, was that of contemptuous indifference. Nevertheless it was he—*not the Pope*—who convened the assembly of prelates at Nicæa, and he probably presided over their deliberations. At any rate he "directed and confirmed" the Council, made sundry important suggestions, intervened continually in its debates upon the several arguments, *secured modifications in the form of the Creed*, and generally (as the Roman Catholic Bishop Hefele says in his *Councils of the Church*, i. 250) "exercised a decided influence on the discussions," pacified the violent, and "led all to a mutual understanding." He proposed, and caused to be carried, certain alterations in the Creed introduced by Eusebius, which were "virtually the proclamation of a new doctrine";[2] and the Creed, thus amended at his instance, was eventually passed by a large majority. Briefly, it was mainly owing to his exertions and unfailing tact that a conclusion, which as usual was a compromise, was finally reached. It was he, too, who ratified the Nicene Creed on which our orthodox theology is now based, though he subsequently permitted Pagan worship and showed his contempt for orthodoxy by persecuting it with considerable vigour from 328 onwards.[3] It may also be mentioned that his son and successor, Constantius, was a confirmed partisan of the Arian cause.

"Creeds," says the Dean of St. Paul's in his *Outspoken*

[1] He was ultimately baptized on his death-bed, and so received into the Church, by the historian-bishop Eusebius.

[2] *Encyclopædia Britannica*, art. "Nicæa," by a prominent theological professor.

[3] Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, vol. iii, pp. 65, 97.

Essays, p. 134, are "documents which only represent the opinions of a majority at a meeting; and what manner of meetings Church Councils sometimes were, is known to history": we ought not to "make a fetish of the Creeds." These words, in the mouth of an exceptionally influential dignitary of the Church, naturally jarred upon sensitive ears. Let us test their truth by a short summary of other happenings at the Council of Nicæa, the first, and perhaps the most important, of the great Œcumenical Councils. When the delegates summoned by the Emperor met in the council chamber the bitterness was indescribable. From the works of Gibbon, Kaye, Milman, and Hefele—Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Agnostic alike—we learn that there were many "controversies, accusations, and replies"; "mutual accusation, defence, and recrimination prolonged the debate." Episcopal malice occupied itself in spreading calumny abroad; bishops wrote down and circulated the most scandalous libels against their brother prelates. Divers memorials were sent by them to the Emperor abusing each other, and by the laity incriminating the bishops. Constantine took no notice, but very wisely ordered them all to be burned. The whole thing is suggestive of an "Irish night" in the British House of Commons during the last century, but the disorderly conduct at Nicæa was far more scandalous. The sole "heathen" present at the Council, the Emperor Constantine himself, would appear to have been the one person who comported himself like a gentleman and a Christian; and it was only his diplomatic suavity and address that succeeded in maintaining some semblance of decency and order. In the end Consubstantiality was vindicated in the face of powerful opposition; the precise nature, origin, and attributes of the Logos were fiercely debated, and His status in the Christian Trinity was finally determined, by a body of men who seem, to modern eyes at any rate, to have been singularly unfitted for the task entrusted to them. Owing largely to the skilful guiding hand of Constantine an agreement, or rather compromise, was also arrived at in other difficult matters, and the first concordat between Church and State was brought about.

Never before or since, I venture to think, were fundamental principles of religion, vital articles in "the faith once delivered to the Saints" of the greatest Church in the world, settled in so questionable a fashion. Let us not forget that an important amendment embodying the contentions of the Alexandrians, which ultimately passed into the Christian faith, was proposed by a man who was not at the time a member of that faith, and that it was mainly due to his influence that it was ultimately accepted. It also seems pretty clear that on one point, as we are told by the learned author of the article in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "the voting was no criterion of the inward convictions of the Council"; and that, on the wider issues involved on the discussions, "the Church had pledged herself without genuine assent."[1] Lastly, the formula agreed upon by these quarrelsome and most unsatisfactory prelates—after a very unedifying debate regulated by a non-Christian monarch of an agnostic turn[2]—was sent forth to the world as the fiat of the Holy Ghost delivered by Him to His chosen representatives. It is still embodied, as we all know, in the profession of faith recited every Sunday morning in Christian places of worship.

Such were the circumstances and the atmosphere in which the Nicene Creed, for sixteen centuries the battle-cry of Catholic orthodoxy, was generated; and the layman may well be permitted to question the propriety of dogmatic religion compelling people—under threats of the stake, the rack, eternal condemnation or other spiritual penalties—to accept doctrine formulated under such peculiar conditions. It is not surprising that so artificial an arrangement, unity resting on such precarious foundations, failed to bring about a permanent peace: "in fact, it paved the way for a struggle which convulsed the whole empire." The Nicene Creed was no sooner ratified, by an Emperor in the parlous position of all unbaptized persons, than the squabble broke out afresh, and from that time forwards theological passion continued to rage without inter-

[1] *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Nicæa," p. 641.

[2] "The piercing eye of ambition and avarice soon discovered that the profession of Christianity might contribute to the interest of the present, as well as of a future life" (Gibbon, iii. 43). In this very year, 325, Constantine virtually murdered his own son, Crispus (ibid., p. 22).

mission. The mind of Constantine, which was always preoccupied with the main chance and political expediency, after wavering between orthodoxy and Arianism, finally inclined towards the latter. Arius himself, who "reckoned among his immediate followers two bishops, seven presbyters, twelve deacons, and (what may appear almost incredible) seven hundred virgins,"[1] was restored to royal favour; Athanasius was persecuted, and other champions of orthodoxy were deposed on various accusations by the sentence of numerous councils, and afterwards banished into distant provinces. The faith of Arius was approved by the synod of Jerusalem; the Emperor issued an absolute command that he should be solemnly admitted to communion in the Cathedral of Constantinople, and the true quality of Constantine's religion was made plain to the world.[2] Destiny, however, ruled otherwise. At the moment fixed for the triumph of Arius, and his readmission to the Catholic fold, he died a sudden and horrible death, the details of which may be found in the pages of Gibbon. Whether we ought to recognize in the tragic end of the arch-heretic the hand of Providence, or merely poison administered by orthodox saints, is a question which has not yet been determined.

Fresh trials were in store for orthodoxy, and the regulation of Catholic doctrine once more passed into strange hands. On the death of Constantine in 337 the fate of the Trinitarian controversy depended, in great measure, upon his worthless son and successor, Constantius II. The Arian presbyter, or bishop, took with great accuracy the measure of the commander of the faithful, and moulded with admirable skill the religion (if we may use the term in such a connexion) of a prince whose public counsels, as Gibbon says, "were always swayed by his domestic favourites. The eunuchs and slaves diffused the spiritual poison (of Arianism) through the palace, and the dangerous infection was communicated by the female attendants to the guards, and by the empress to her unsuspicious

[1] Gibbon, vol. iii, p. 53.

[2] Since the above was written Dean Inge has made this pertinent observation: "It was hardly 'the Galilean' who conquered with Constantine."

husband." By such strange methods of propagandism were creeds fashioned in those days, and the fate of religion determined. It may be mentioned here that Constantius followed in his father's footsteps, not only by adopting the Arian theories, but by delaying for prudential reasons the date of his baptism. In those days the proselytes of Christianity thought it unwise to precipitate this salutary rite. "By the delay of their baptism they could venture freely to indulge their passions in the enjoyment of this world, while they still retained in their own hands the means of a sure and easy absolution." [1] Owing to the discomfiture of the orthodox, and the Imperial condescension towards heresy, Catholic theology got more mixed than ever. Constantius divided his leisure hours between amusements of a questionable kind and religious controversy, for which nature surely never intended him. Being intellectually incapable of understanding the points at issue, he constantly changed his creeds; but his incoherent dreams were received as celestial visions by "ecclesiastics who forgot the interests of their order for the gratification of their passions." [2] Desirous, like his dead father, of establishing uniformity of doctrine, he summoned two general councils, whose proceedings were even more unsatisfactory than those at Nicæa. The bishops of the West held their deliberations at the memorable synod of Rimini in 360, an even larger Council than the Nicene; and the Prætorian præfect who had charge of it was instructed not to allow the bishops to separate until they should all be united in the same opinion. Threats of banishment, "the distress of cold and hunger, and the tedious melancholy of a hopeless exile," at length brought about the desired agreement on doctrinal matters. "The deputies of the East and West attended the Emperor in the palace of Constantinople, and he enjoyed the satisfaction of imposing on the world a profession of faith which established the *likeness*, without expressing the *consubstantiality*, of the Son

[1] Gibbon, vol. iii, p. 21. Cardinal Newman was of the opinion that Gibbon was "the only English writer who has any claim to be considered an ecclesiastical historian" (see the *Spectator*, April 19, 1924).

[2] Ibid., p. 68.

of God." [1] But in this case the Arian pestilence was countered in the West, the bishops being "supplied with the seasonable preservative of the Homoousion by the paternal care of the Roman pontiff." Orthodoxy was vindicated in the end, and the "Homoousian standard" replanted in the Church; but the curious origins of Catholic dogma or professions of faith, the terrorism by which they were extorted, and the flimsiness of the foundations upon which "Catholic truth" rests, had received fresh and striking illustration.

It was at the Council of Nicæa that orthodoxy first became fixed within the set limits of rigid dogma, and it seems worth considering whether canons of belief, settled under conditions such as I have described, are deserving of the reverence that is paid to them. Surely the Dean of St. Paul's hits the mark when he says that "organized religion has been a failure ever since" the Council, that "a profound reconstruction" of our ancient beliefs is demanded, and that Catholicism and Protestantism (in their existing forms) "are both obsolescent phases in the evolution of the Christian religion." Loyalty to what is called "Catholic truth"—as though truth were but the handmaid of denominationalism—is the cement which now binds many devout men and women together, but thoughtful people know well that the time-worn fabric of religious provincialism is beginning to show ominous signs of cracking. It is doubtless true that, as we also learn on the Dean's high authority, the average churchgoer appreciates shallow rhetoric more than sound scholarship; but I think he enjoys, more than either, being mystified by long words and big-sounding formulas such as those with which the Athanasian Creed has provided us. He likes to hear about a triple Incomprehensible who is nevertheless single, and a Consubstantiality that he cannot fathom. It might, perhaps, surprise him greatly to learn that "substance" is not a word or idea of Christ's, but a legacy from Greek metaphysic. It is defined as "the assumed substratum of qualities." What this substratum consists of, or whether it exists at all, nobody has the faintest idea: it has not received in over two thousand years one-tenth part of the

[1] Gibbon, vol. iii, p. 69.

verification that Einstein's recondite theories have received in five. Not Christ or His disciples, but Plato and Aristotle, were the fathers of these ancient metaphysical abstractions. The Council of Nicæa was "talking Greek," not the language of primitive or true Christianity: the sources of the bishops' inspiration were Hellenic or Greco-Oriental, not Palestinian. And it would be a dreadful thing if "substance" should—to borrow the words of a leading orthodox weekly journal—prove after all to be "a bestial blunder."

What we have to remember is that people do not now take their religious doctrines on trust, as they did formerly. The significant fact, as it seems to me, in the religious world of our time is the enormously increased number of people who are seriously pondering these things, and the critical and severely practical turn which speculation about religious or philosophical questions is taking. The growing outspokenness of the clerical opinion which thinking men and women listen to is another factor which must be taken into account. Some recent utterances of our leading divines on the subject of the problems discussed at Nicæa must be extremely startling to people brought up in the old-fashioned views. Let me give one or two salient examples.

The Johannine identification of Christ with the Logos left this particular branch of theology is a sad tangle, and the most daring devices have been, and still are, adopted with a view to unravel the skein. St. Paul has no Logos-doctrine, we are told, and the statement appears to be true. He was at issue, critics argue, with the author of the First Gospel, in that he regarded the Holy Spirit as the principle of incarnation as well as of immanence, and "identified Him with Jesus": in the Apostle's writings "incarnation is of the Holy Spirit." [1] I have no solution of the difficulty to offer, but can only say that I do not find in all this abstruse metaphysic any traces of that "mystery of simplicity" which is said to be the note of all true Christianity. No less confused and puzzling are the Trinitarian theories formulated in the Creeds of Nicæa and Athanasius,

[1] See the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, art. "Spirit"; and Tyrrell's *Christianity at the Cross-Roads*, p. 262.

and accepted by the Saint's successors down to our day. They were fashioned by a gradual process about which very little is known. They grew for the most part, and quite slowly, in the congenial atmosphere of Alexandrian Hellenism, and the innovations they introduced would have made a primitive saint shudder. Nor are they altogether to the taste of us moderns. In the *Hibbert Journal* for July 1922, I find popular Christianity described by a Canon of the Establishment as "Tritheism with reservations"; and the reservations are assuming proportions that repel and alarm orthodox believers. Discussion has lately centred round the status and functions of the Third Person of the Trinity. As the Spirit of Wisdom, the great Teacher and Illuminator of mankind, the Holy Ghost would appear to be the natural impersonation of the Logos idea; and so, as appears probable, many early authorities regarded Him. It may be going too far to say, as some do say, that the identification of Christ with the Logos has rendered the Spirit superfluous by merging Him for all practical and philosophic purposes with the other two Persons of the Trinity; but it has undoubtedly reduced His importance in popular estimation. "We have lost touch with the Spirit," as Sir A. Conan Doyle is reported to have said the other day. His position in the canonical Olympus is not what it was: "the central light is Christ, and Christ only,"[1] in the triumphant Johannine doctrine. To put it shortly, "Jesus and the Spirit became interchangeable terms," as Father Tyrrell says in *Christianity at the Cross-Roads*, p. 263.

All this being so, it is not surprising that the devotion which the Holy Ghost inspires is growing fainter, and the shrines erected in His honour are much fewer. He has faded away into a vague indefinite Figure, a dim conception of a Divinity who has been relegated to a secondary position. Cardinal Manning in his later years became keenly aware of this neglect. "A very simple but devout person" asked him why, in his first volume of sermons, he said so little about the Holy Ghost. He replied that he was not aware of it, but admitted the justice of the reproach and was conscience-

[1] *Christian Mysticism*, by Dean Inge, p. 48.

stricken. "I at once resolved that I would make reparation every day of my life to the Holy Ghost. . . . I bought all the books I could about the Holy Ghost. I worked out the truths about His personality, His presence, and His office."[1] But nowadays the very term "Holy Ghost" has fallen into disfavour, and Modernism is at work attenuating the doctrine concerning Him. For example, I find in a recent and authoritative book, published in three large volumes, that the "later Catholic doctrine" of the Holy Spirit—namely, that by its operation man obtained a new nature, and so won eternal life—"belongs to that curious mixture of philosophy and magic which dominated the last centuries of heathen life."[2]

In the ears of another scholarly divine, Dr. G. Jackson, the "accepted commonplaces" about the story of Pentecost "ring hollow and unreal." He further considers that "Ghost" has now become, in this connexion, a quite meaningless word which should drop out of our religious vocabulary.[3] The same writer is of the opinion—which, by the way, was shared by the late Mgr. Duchesne—that the average Christian in these days (as was also the case in Apostolic times) troubles his head very little about these recondite problems of theology: I certainly cannot imagine the British public growing so excited about them as people did in the days of the Nicene Council. "Daddy," said a little girl of Dr. Jackson's acquaintance, "I can understand about the Father and the Son, but I haven't any use for the Holy Ghost." And there, in the "refreshing frankness" of this little girl, says the Doctor, "the thoughts of many hearts are revealed."[4] In earlier ages the Holy Spirit inspired prophets with wisdom, and ordinary men with virtue, and Jesus regarded Himself as being possessed with Him; but Modernist theology is disposed to explain this possession in terms of the new psychology. The Spirit, it is

[1] See *Eminent Victorians*, by Lytton Strachey, p. 112.

[2] *The Beginnings of Christianity*, edited by the Revs. Foakes-Jackson, D.D., and Kirsopp Lake, D.D., i. 325. The authors also point out that at Pentecost the gift of the Spirit came, not from the Third Person of the Trinity, but from Christ.

[3] "The Holy Spirit," by the Rev. G. Jackson, D.D., Biblical Professor in a Northern College—*Hibbert Journal*, July 1922.

[4] Ibid.

said, " now represents, not so much a religion as a consciousness " : in plain words, He would seem to have undergone the usual fate of divinities in our day, and to have been psychoanalysed.

Truly we are getting on, and one is tempted to speculate as to what will be the final upshot of it all. One thing, however, seems fairly clear. It would seem impossible, even for Roman Catholics, to suppose that the weird assemblage which gathered together in the council chamber at Nicæa settled for all time problems of such transcendent moment and intricacy. The subject, viewed as a whole, becomes more and more puzzling as the years roll on, and finality seems further off than ever. It has been well said that, if we speak the truth boldly, we irritate our fellow-men ; if we say what is false, we offend God. Most people, where religion is concerned, prefer to follow a middle course and to express no opinion at all. But this attitude of evasion towards subjects of speculative inquiry is no longer regarded as an essential element in social " good form " ; and in any case it is not one that can be maintained in perpetuity. Revision of the Creeds may be—one eminent Modernist, the late Dean Rashdall, says that it is—a task fraught with endless difficulty and danger ; but it will have to be undertaken, if I am not mistaken, before the world is very much older.

CHAPTER XIII

DEMONOLOGY

Demonology, the science that treats of evil spirits and their influence on mankind, has always been an essential element in the history of mystical religion everywhere. Magic, the parent of religion and science alike, is at once eclectic and syncretistic. No Church can possibly get on without the Devil and his henchmen, and the magicians of all time have borrowed freely from all faiths. Satan, who is the Persian Ahriman made Prince of devils, is a necessary mainstay of the Papacy, as its theologians admit: without him the Church's prestige would wane, and her priests would starve. "That fellow cares not what becomes of God, but he can't give up his devil," shouted a rude Strasburger to a friar who complained that Meister Eckhart had swept the universe clean of the Devil.[1] Various Popes and infallible Councils have strictly forbidden the practice of medicine and surgery by laymen, but the priest has always remained a medicine-man by virtue of his powers as an exorcist. Origen condemned the adjuration of devils as "a Jewish trick,"a thing not according to the power given by Christ; and St. Chrysostom said, "We poor wretches cannot drive away flies, much less devils." But Catholicism, even in our day, knows better than the Saint, and exorcism is once more becoming the fashion.

In pre-scientific times evil spirits were tackled, like insect parasites, with sulphur, assafœtida, and other disinfectants. A disease, as Father Tyrrell remarks, was a devil who must be driven from the system by a qualified religious practitioner. A powerful emetic throws him out, and if the first dose fails it must be repeated in stronger form. Pope Leo XIII "exorcised Rome daily; and the prevailing mind of uncritical Catholics

[1] *Hours with the Mystics*, ii. 195.

is still quick to explain all the evils of the time by the Devil and his human agents—Jews, Freemasons, Protestants, and Modernists." [1] Throughout the pages of history we read of demons, vampires, *succubi*, and other spiritual vermin crawling about the dark corners of an unseen world peopled by the obscene creations of popular or theological imagination. In the Far East the sublime yearnings of the mystic, Lao-tse, after the Tau, or Absolute, "has been degraded into an eager quest after elixirs of immortality." Taouism has for many centuries been directed by a Papacy, and the pontiff is himself the chief exorciser of demons, as Leo XIII was in Rome. But the Chinese Pope is not content with merely exorcising the devils; he "keeps guard over thousands of sealed jars, in which languish the spirits he has conquered." [2] In ancient Rome the professional *haruspex*, or diviner, earned a precarious livelihood by inspecting the entrails of frogs and charging a fee for his pretended knowledge and power to placate demons: Juvenal, as we have seen, disclaimed any connexion with these fraudulent gentlemen. The Gnostics freely used formulas of magic for casting out devils, healing diseases, and discovering thieves. They practised divination, obtained answers to dreams, and had phylacteries against evil spirits: among the spells they employed were the windpipe of a goose and strips of asses' skin appropriately figured.[3] The Rosicrucians possessed solar powders made of the concentrated fire of the world, wherewith they subdued demons, sylphs, gnomes, and salamanders. They greatly alarmed people with stories of the battling that went on every night in the bowels of the earth between blood-red and milk-white dragons. The Green Lion—an inferior creature, whom spiritual alchemy would one day raise to the superior dignity of a Red Dragon—was pursued with great zest, as Vaughan and other credible authorities inform us, by Paracelsus through the meads and forests of Diana. He and the Red Dragon both appear on the sign-

[1] Tyrrell's *Christianity at the Cross-Roads*, p. 72.
[2] Gould's *Concise History of Religion*, i. 99.
[3] Legge's *Forerunners*, etc., i. 98, 104.

boards of our village inns, though probably few of the local topers have any idea of their occult significance; whether the Blue Boar and Spotted Dog have a similarly profound symbolic meaning I am not in a position to state.

The Rosicrucian Trinity of Sulphur, Salt, and Mercury effected a matrimonial alliance between chemistry and theology, and it was reputed to work wonders against the terrors of the unseen world. In the *Secretum Magicum* attributed to Paracelsus "we find mention of a chemical Virgin Mary, of chemical deaths and resurrections, falls and redemptions, adopted from theological phraseology." [1] Later on, in the eighteenth century, Cagliostro followed suit with his elixirs and red powders and phosphorous glories, and other hocus-pocus, and swindled the credulous to the top of their bent. The Jesuits, enraged at the success of these rival professors of magic arts, aided the secular arm in getting rid of their dangerous competitors in humbug. But there was this difference between them. The Rosicrucians and their kidney, with their:

> stupendous
> And tremendous (Heaven defend us)
> Demoniaco-seraphic
> Penman's latest piece of graphic,

sometimes admitted that they were impostors; the Jesuits never did.

Theurgic ritual, elixirs, spells, symbols, initiations, sacraments, etc., were in great favour with these hierophants, who used them to obtain a mastery over those subtile creatures of the elements, the salamanders. Fiend-compelling, demon-exorcising words and emblems gave men "power over the spirit-world, from the first-class angel to the vulgar ghost"; and devils fled affrighted from, or else came willingly to the aid of, the possessors of esoteric knowledge. People in those days lived in an atmosphere of what somebody has aptly termed "stuffed crocodile," and its musty fragrance still continues to haunt the temples of superstition. Belief in the magical efficacy of certain words, incantations, and adjurations

[1] Vaughan's *Hours with the Mystics*, ii. 78.

was common, just as it is common amongst civilized peoples to-day. Demons, the Rosicrucians and Kabbalists averred—and modern orthodoxy agrees—form *liaisons* with human beings, and the alleged results of these flirtations with the denizens of the lower regions may be learned from the erudite nonsense of Papist moral theologians. The incredibly fatuous and perfectly bestial disputations of these men—some of whose most offensive works are admitted to contain nothing more than "the common teaching" of the modern Church—baffle comprehension. Their writings are primers of obscenity, and would appear to be the product of minds diseased by impure and morbid studies and thwarted natural instincts.[1]

That "Most High and Mightie Prince," King James the First of England, anticipated this chapter long ago, by writing a learned treatise on *Dæmonologie*. In it we find the assertion by that wisest of fools that "those who decry the power of the divell are guilty of the error of the Sadducees," and that there are at least twenty female witches for at least one male. The reason given for this disparity is that women, being frailer than men, are more easily entrapped by Satan. His Majesty was himself a keen hunter of witches, and he was instrumental in persuading Parliament to pass a law making witchcraft a capital offence. Anticipating that saintly Doctor of the Church St. Alphonsus Liguori, he was also a firm believer in the efficacy of torture, which, as he said (again anticipating the Saint), "witnesseth their guiltiness." Like the accredited Catholic theologian, he approved of the torture being repeated and, if necessary, being made more severe; and on one occasion he is said to have made some helpful suggestions when a victim, already sufficiently mangled, was about to be subjected to

[1] Emboldened by the example of the Dean of St. Paul's, I venture, not without a certain trepidation, to give one striking example. The following passage is from Schram's *Mysticism*, an authoritative work written for the direction of confessing priests, which is studied in the great Catholic university of Louvain: it is quoted on p. 265 of Dr. Inge's *Christian Mysticism*. "Quæri potest utrum dæmon per turpem concubitum possit violenter opprimere marem vel feminam, cujus obsessio permissa sit" (presumably by the Church) "ob finem perfectionis et contemplationis acquirendæ." The answer, says Dean Inge, is in the affirmative; "and the evidence is such as could hardly be described, even in Latin."

further maltreatment. King James, however, was of opinion that satisfactory proof of the crime must be forthcoming before the torture is administered. In this respect the King seems to have been more scrupulous than Liguori, who thought that "a half-full proof" (*semi-plena probatio*) was sufficient to justify the conviction and subsequent torture of a heretic.[1]

King James's efforts to stamp out the odious crime of witchcraft seem to have met with a certain amount of success; and in his native country, Scotland, the last execution for witchcraft took place in 1722, when an insane old woman was burned for bewitching pigs and poultry, transforming her daughter, and having her shod by the Devil. She was duly "wirreit at a stake, and brint in assis" in the respectable Northern town of Dornoch.[2] Millions of unfortunate women have been similarly killed, tortured, or otherwise ill-used owing to this disgusting superstition, which is still harboured by numbers of otherwise sensible persons in this century. "Religion," I need hardly say, was mainly responsible for these atrocities, just as it is now responsible for the degrading beliefs to which I have alluded. In 1484 Pope Innocent VIII issued a famous Bull which started a long course of persecution. "It has come to our ears," said His Holiness, "that very many persons of both sexes, deviating from the Catholic faith, abuse themselves with demons, Incubus and Succubus;[3] and by incantations, charms, and conjurations, and other wicked superstitions, have caused the offspring of men and women and of the lower animals . . . to perish, be oppressed, and utterly destroyed; that they torture men and women with cruel pains and torments, internal as well as external; that they hinder the proper intercourse of the sexes, and the propagation of the human species. Moreover, they are in the habit of denying the very faith itself." He therefore gave orders, by his apostolical authority, for appropriate punishment to be dealt out to all such

[1] See the writer's *Roman Mischief-Maker*, 3rd ed., p. 222.

[2] *The Scottish Historical Review*, April 1923.

[3] The *succuba* of Papist theology, the female demon who induces evil and impure visions, was anticipated by the Pagans centuries before our era. See an engraving from a Greek relief, on p. 203 of Miss Harrison's *Prolegomena*, etc.

offenders. He also commissioned a villainous Inquisitor named Sprenger, author of a celebrated work *The Witch Hammer*, to root out witches—which he did with the utmost zeal. "Everything that ingenuity could suggest or brutality execute was provided for"; and the book formed the "basis for all subsequent works on the detection and punishment of witches."[1]

For nearly two centuries after the Papal Bull there was an epidemic of anti-witch barbarity. Six hundred witches are said to have been burned by a single bishop in Bamberg; and in the bishopric of Wurzburg a hundred and sixty-two suffered a like fate in one month, *thirty-four* of them being *young children*.[2] At Toulouse, Lecky tells us, the seat of the Inquisition, four hundred persons perished on charges of sorcery at a single execution. Even the brute creation did not escape. At Basle, in 1474, a cock of the town was convicted of the crime of laying eggs, and was condemned to be burned at the stake with one of his eggs. Male birds that commit this offence nowadays are more mercifully dealt with; but the pastime of witch-hunting is still indulged in now and then by people who call themselves civilized. Among native races it is common enough. A short time ago a Rhodesian native, who was held responsible for a drought, was burned by his fellow-tribesmen in order to placate the rain-god; and it will be remembered that Catholic theology, not to be outdone by African savages, still declares, with full Papal approbation, that heretics ought to be flogged and "burned without appeal or delay."[3]

What is wanted, says a *Times* leader-writer discussing these modern outbreaks of witch-mania, is "a general disbelief in magic of all kinds." "The real remedy is a gradual process of education, to destroy belief in magic." Most excellent advice, but hardly palatable, I should say, to the priests or the laity of the essentially magical forms of religion which

[1] *Religion and Sex*, by Chapman Cohen, p. 249. Other details about witch-hunting, etc., will be found in Mr. Cohen's book, and in Lecky's *Rise and Influence of Rationalism*.

[2] Cohen, p. 250.

[3] See Father De Luca's *Institutiones Juris Ecclesiastici Publici*, 1901, strongly recommended by Leo XIII, pp. 147–8, 258 sq., 270.

still find favour amongst us here. I was reading the other day extracts (also in *The Times*) from a book by Mr. G. C. Claridge on the life and customs of the demon-worshipping savages on the Ba-Congo, in West Africa; and once more the reflection crossed my mind how slight is the difference that separates their beliefs, religious rites and codes and ceremonies, from those of more civilized communities. "What tragedies are hidden in these landscapes!" exclaims the author; and he goes on to describe how the victims of savage superstition are hurled with bound limbs down gigantic precipices, while witches were regularly murdered and their bodies burned. The Ba-Congo people seem, by the way, to have been more merciful than the Christian witch-hunters: they at least waited till their victims were dead before burning them. From birth to death the native of the Ba-Congo lives in an atmosphere of fetish. Fetishes effect cures, bring or withhold rain, guarantee good crops, good sport, and other material blessings. Idols guard the doors of houses, charms and images protect the virginity of maidens. Roman Catholic robbers and brigands invoke the aid of the Virgin or their patron saint when setting out on their predatory expeditions; but on the Congo they have images which, while they scare away demons, also deter thieves. Magicians (as with us) attend the native at his birth, throughout his life, and promote his welfare after death. To maintain the system a whole army of priests, male and female, is active "deceiving its victims, but principally self-deceived. It embraces an intelligence department, a sort of secret service system" (like that instituted by St. Ignatius Loyola) "which keeps the profession well-informed of all the sins, ills, weaknesses, fears, hopes, and needs of the community to which it ministers." Women are admitted to the priesthood. "Why not?" asks Mr. Claridge with a certain asperity. "They can perform its fantasies, drone its twaddle, keep up its deceptions, perpetuate its mysteries, as well as any male colleague in the office." [1]

All this, with more to the same effect, is another reminder that institutional religion of the dogmatic order is pretty

[1] *Wild Bush Tribes of Tropical Africa*: see *The Times*, January 14, 1922.

much the same everywhere, and in all grades of culture. Mr. Chesterton has expressed the opinion that we are much more superstitious than our forefathers; he is himself a firm believer in witchcraft, and is proud of it, so he ought to know. Moreover, our daily and weekly Press is continually affording evidence confirmatory of Mr. Chesterton's statement. Some of our bishops, clergy, and clerically minded laity are busy blazing the trail for a return to mediæval superstition; and a good many people, who resemble King James I in their dread of demons, openly avow a belief in evil spirits and in the old primitive methods of countering their maleficent activities. One well-known physician has stated his belief, at a Church meeting presided over by the Bishop of Kensington, that in certain cases of insanity and epilepsy the patient is "controlled by an evil and obsessing discarnate entity"; and he wants the Roman service of exorcism to be brought back to the Church of England liturgy. The late Anglo-Catholic Bishop of Zanzibar (the "Zanzibarbarian" of a famous limerick) told us how he exorcised the *djinns* which infest his African diocese. In the Cathedral at Dundee, two years ago, an unfortunate woman had an evil spirit ejected from her person; and a Very Reverend Provost assured the congregation that it was a clear case of demoniacal possession. Many other instances of the fiend-compelling energies of our episcopate, laity, and clergy could be cited.

The Devil plays a very important part in the Jesuit Exercises, in which novices are drilled by the command of the Director; and Count von Hoensbroech says that "Jesuit devotional literature is for the most part devil-literature." The Exercises "must produce the impression that the world is literally full of devils, who run to and fro busily striving to drive men into the horrors of hell. They serve to arouse coarse sensual terror, and the result is that the terrified exercitant clings closely to the Director of Exercises, and, through him, to the Jesuit Order." Even the Modernist Father Tyrrell, who was for many years a member of the Jesuit Society, holds that every baptized infant is "made a divine creature by the expulsion of the Devil and the introduction of the Holy Ghost." There

is " an irruption of the transcendental into the natural order," which is not the work of nature, but of unmerited grace, and until this takes place the child is possessed by Satan, in virtue of his natural birth. Renunciation of the Devil and his retinue (*pompa*) is the necessary preliminary of baptism.

A young man of my acquaintance recently had a very strange and distressing experience. He was confirmed by his bishop in the usual way, in company with several other boys (including the writer's son), and all seemed to be well. It subsequently transpired, however, that his parents had unfortunately neglected to have him christened. He was therefore still subject (to borrow Father Tyrrell's words) to " the thraldom of Satan," and in that sad case which Cardinal Newman forcibly describes in his *Anglican Difficulties* as " the feeble and frightful condition of those who never were baptized." In the absence of this indispensable preliminary it would appear that theology held him to be confirmed, not in grace, but in original sin; and Satan still possessed him. The neglected ceremony was accordingly performed in due course, and the Devil driven out. I understand, also, that a special ceremony of exorcism, or incantation of some sort, had to be gone through, whereby the effects of the invalid confirmation might be obliterated. The customary rites were then repeated, and the young man duly enrolled in the ranks of the elect.

In old days epilepsy used to be regarded by civilized people as a " divine disease," and its convulsions were supposed to be a form of supernatural inspiration. Mohammed himself is said to have been an epileptic, and during my travels in the hinterland of Morocco forty years ago I found that many of the country Moors invested lunatics with a saintly character. St. Augustine went so far as to say that all diseases of Christians are to be ascribed to demons; and I deem it my duty to caution the public that there is still in force an ecclesiastical canon which prescribes definite penalties for the casting out of devils by unlicensed persons. This warning would seem to be necessary at a time when demonological theory is once more coming into fashion. For the benefit of qualified practitioners, on the other hand, a short enumeration of the

remedies proposed, and of methods which have hitherto proved efficacious in casting out devils, seems desirable. Among the Gnostics, and many of the older mystics, it was a common idea that "to *know* a demon, to name his name to him, was to deprive him of his power to thwart. All this knowing was *gnosis*; and a suitable list of uncouth barbaric names is given by Irenæus.[1] To couple a demon's name with abusive epithets—the stronger the better—was to cause him intense pain and to assist in defeating his evil designs. The Saints used terrible language in their objurgatory exorcisms; they stigmatized Satan as "a Tartarean boor," bestial and foolish drunkard, loathsome cobbler, filthy sow, swollen toad, lousy swineherd, etc. etc.[2] That mighty German theosophist, Jacob Behmen, by trade a cobbler, grew dissatisfied with his last and awl, and fought evil spirits with spiritual weapons. He took a leaf from the book of the Saints and was most discourteous to the Devil; he told him exactly what he thought about him, bade him do his worst, and ended up by calling him "a d——d stinking goat."[3] In the *Dissuasive* of the learned Bishop Taylor, quoted by the late Mr. R. P. Blakeney in his admirable work on St. Alphonsus Liguori (p. 153), there is a lengthy form of adjuration which may be found useful by bishops, clergymen, practising physicians, and other laymen in their self-imposed task of expelling demons from our afflicted bodies.

The exorcist, says the Bishop, must tie his stole about the neck of the possessed with three knots, and then proceed to rail at the Devil for all he is worth. He must "call him damned Devil, unclean spirit, and as bad as he can call him"; and pray that he may be cast out of "the man's mouth and nose, lips and teeth, jaws and cheeks, eyes and forehead, eyebrows and eyelids, marrow and bones." If it be a deaf devil, he must speak louder, tell him his faults, threaten him terribly, and conjure him again, saying over him twenty or thirty names of Christ; then consign him to the sulphurous flames of hell,

[1] Bevan's *Hellenism and Christianity*, p. 79.
[2] Cohen's *Religion and Sex*, p. 73.
[3] Vaughan's *Hours with the Mystics*, ii. 102.

to be tortured worse than Lucifer, for daring to resist so many great names. If the Devil be stubborn (and some of them are very disobedient) the exorcist must take fire and brimstone, and make a fume; stir and sprinkle holy water, take sulphur, galbanum, assafœtida, aristolochia, rue, and St. John's wort, and bless them distinctly. He should also make a picture of the Devil, and write his name over the head of it, throw the picture into the fire, and conjure the fire to burn it most horribly and hastily; and then insult the Devil "in a long form of crowing over him, which is there set down."

Even if these measures fail, the exorcist need not despair: he has other strings to his bow. We gather from experts in demonology that devils of all sorts and in all places—be they Zanzibarbarian *djinns*, or *succubi* from South Kensington—are exceedingly obstinate creatures. Only specialists are competent to deal with them,[1] and even they are not invariably successful. Sometimes the devil (like Glasgow tenement occupiers under the Rent Acts) refuses to be evicted unless he obtains an assurance of finding suitable premises elsewhere. The unfortunate Gadarene swine would appear to have been the victims of an arrangement of this kind; but St. Alphonsus Liguori, an unquestioned authority upon the subject, says in his *Moral Theology* (*De Adjuratione*), that it is "more probably" unlawful to allow the devil to enter the body of any other man or beast. The Saint also gives exorcists some other useful hints as to the best ways of dealing with evil spirits. Above all things, the operator must be careful not to joke with the devil (*caveat ne cum dæmone jocetur*), and, if he holds useless conversations with the possessing demon, he cannot be excused from grievous sin. Spectators may be present at the operation, but "women, boys, and idle men with weak faith" are to be excluded. There are no infallible, only "probable" signs of the devil's departure, such as "great noises," "great vomiting of putrid matter, or breath very fetid."

The writings of this veracious saint and moralist teem with

[1] "Archangels are at once awful and mild," according to Iamblichus; "Angels are yet more gracious, Dæmons terrible." The malignant Dæmons, or Anti-gods, are the worst of the lot.

stories where Satan appears in human or bestial shape to unfortunate mortals, who are found howling and cursing in hysterics, and sometimes "as black as a cinder." One poor lady, who figures among his "Melancholy Examples," had "many serpents coming from her mouth," and there was one "large, horrible-looking serpent, whose head only came out," and afterwards "went back entirely into the lady's mouth." [1] The Devil, on being exorcised, always makes his departure in the conventional manner, with a "tremendous noise," leaving behind him "a dreadful stench" (which sometimes lasts for several days) and making a big hole in the wall.

All this stuff, it will be remembered, has the imprimatur of the Roman Church; and the bulk of it is nothing more than "the common teaching" of her theologians to-day. It is unsurpassed anywhere in its vulgar fatuity, and probably unsurpassable—even in the regions inhabited by the fetish-worshippers of the Ba-Congo.

[1] *Instructions on the Commandments and Sacraments*, p. 310.

CHAPTER XIV

DANGERS OF ECSTASY

EVERY treatise on Mysticism must necessarily be incomplete. The utmost that any author can do is to draw attention to certain elements in it which strike him as specially important; and among these the physical, mental, and moral dangers which beset it must always occupy a prominent place. The mystic complains, not wholly without reason, that his opponents are much too fond of using that blessed word "pathological"; he naturally objects to his visions and experiences being ascribed offhand to a disordered brain or faulty nervous system. On the other side there is a formidable array of scientific authority to show that certain forms of mysticism are evidence of an abnormal condition, and that—what is specially germane to the subject of this chapter—attempts to achieve the ecstatic state only serve to aggravate the disease. For instance, the people who believe in revelation by means of anæsthesia, and think that a disordered condition of the mind will afford them a glimpse of absolute reality, would seem to be clearly in need of medical attention. The man who says that an epileptic fit, which makes him learn the secret of the universe in one brief moment of ecstatic beatitude, is worth a lifetime of normal sanity, is qualifying for a lunatic asylum—and will probably get there.

These, of course, are extreme cases, but mystical energy of a less violent type may also have its dangers. Ecstasy is a dangerous toy to play with, and a man disturbs his psychological balance at his peril. It is said—and I know one or two cases myself which seem to indicate it—that the essence of madness lies in "concentrated egoism." And the egoism of some mystics, especially among those of the ascetic order, is extraordinary. They are lonely souls, and very unneighbourly. They concentrate their energies on their personal salvation,

absorbed in the petty process of saving their own miserable souls, to the exclusion of ordinary human interests. What they covet is that private exaltation which, according to Iamblichus,[1] is "the heaven-given organum" for obtaining happiness, knowledge, and power. Such men, we learn, have no purpose of their own, no mastery over themselves. "They speak wisdom they do not understand, and their faculties, absorbed in a divine power, become the utterance of a superior will." A wondrous glory surrounds the hierophant. "The priest is a prophet full of deity. The subordinate powers of the upper world are at his bidding, for it is not a man, but a god who speaks the word of power. Such a man lives no longer the life common to other men." And "the more the body and the mind have been alike enfeebled by vigil and by fasts, the more ignorant or mentally imbecile a youth may be who is brought under this influence, the more freely and unmixedly will the divine power be made manifest. Characteristics such as these I have mentioned are the marks of the true inspiration."

Colossal egoism of this kind, the spiritual arrogance that makes a man of inferior type imagine that he is a god, are by no means unknown in our day. The half-educated priest who "magnifies his office" and imagines, not only that he can create God, but that he is His equal and can enforce upon Deity obedience to his own petty personal commands, is the victim of illusions which have no religious value or intrinsic validity. He is simply an ego-maniac of the worst type—the type produced by clerical mysticism of the lower order. Under this system it is no use striving to improve our mental and moral qualities, because they are wholly ineffective. Divinity, as "Dionysius" and many other mystics hold, is so exalted that no mortal faculties can avail to reach it. Reason is powerless in the matter, and we are driven back upon Ecstasy, which, in its turn, calls for the abdication of all finite powers, and—it may now be added—upon all sorts of tinkering with the subconscious mind.

So long as the theory exists that morbid mental exaltation is experience of the supernatural, there will always be a danger

[1] See Vaughan's *Hours with the Mystics*, i. 100.

of bodily and mental trouble. A lowered vitality is still considered by some people to be favourable to celestial visions, and they punish their bodies in order to obtain them. It is supposed that a healthy, well-nourished frame is inimical to ecstasy, and closes the door against spiritual illumination, so the health is injured that piety may increase. The brooding mind, said Lord Morley, speaking of Rousseau, which finds no pleasure in action, is always near to catastrophe. The means pursued to achieve illumination—discipline, and a state of mind artificially induced by unwholesome methods—are pursued as ends in themselves. Emotional experiences are intensified and multiplied, to the disturbance of the devotee's mental balance, and the "affective experiences of religion" lose thereby their value as incentives to right action. Emotional piety of this sort easily degenerates into mere sentimental religiosity. "The soul basks in its pleasurable emotions like a cat in the sun, as if the multiplication of emotions were the aim of its religion; with the result at best of moral weakness and at worst of moral disaster."[1]

The greatest, perhaps, of contemporary Catholic mystics, Baron von Hügel, has some very strong observations on the dangers of experimental and artificial emotionalism. He describes the schools of this emotionalism as mere stopgaps in periods of transition or decay, and deems their wayward and fleeting feelings fatal alike to morality and enlightened religion. The seeking after or revelling in emotion, he says, gives "a hiding-place to superstition, sensuality, dreamy self-complacent indolence, and fanaticism." It is calculated to "strain the nerves, to inflame the imagination, to blunt the common sense . . . and to bring us, under the incalculably sapping influences of physical abnormalities, close up to where sanity shades off into madness, and ethical elevation breaks down into morbidness and depravity."[2] These words should be earnestly pondered by all disciples of a religion which, only the other day, I heard somebody describe as "a wallow of emotionalism."

[1] *Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, by R. H. Thouless, M.A., p. 70.
[2] *The Mystical Element of Religion*, pp. 6–8.

Complete union with God being the mystic's ideal, and one that is regarded as being capable of realization, it was only a step further for the contemplatives to aim at identifying themselves with the Divine. It was thought that the truly inspired initiate might become one with God, and "with good reason be called God." "Let no man strive to become a god," was Pindar's warning;[1] but the mystics disregarded it, as well as the dangers which beset the man who makes the attempt. They forgot that not everybody is fitted to scale the heights of Being, or is capable of breathing in that rarefied atmosphere. Some thought that deification was attainable through immortality; the German mystics of the fourteenth century were convinced that in the human mind there is a divine spark, or sparklet (*Fünklein*) that is not merely united to, but one with, God. The divine glory becomes their glory, their inborn light the light of heaven. Molinos and the Spanish mystics followed suit with similar doctrine. In earlier days the Fathers, from the third century onwards, taught that immortal man might become deified; and in later times the theory has been the progenitor of monstrous absurdities. Most religions must share the blame, but (as we have seen) the blasphemies and fatuities of certain Roman ecclesiastics are probably the worst. The priest at the altar tells us that he is "a second Jesus Christ" (*sacerdos alter Christus*): he is superior to Mary, because she only once bare Christ, but priests create and beget Him every day.[2]

Not even the serene and lofty spirit of Emerson was proof against the temptation to indulge in futile arrogance of a similar, if less vulgar kind. His "egotheism" expresses itself in a variety of strange ebullitions of self-worship. "The simplest person, who in his integrity worships God, becomes God." "The soul saith, 'I, the imperfect, adore my own Perfect. I am receptive of the great soul. . . . I live in thoughts, and act with energies, which are immortal. . . . I become a transparent eyeball. . . . I am part or particle of God.'"

[1] Μὴ ματεύσῃ θεὸς γενέσθαι, *Olympia*, v. 24.

[2] Further choice specimens, with references, may be obtained from Mr. A. Le Lievre, of Ilford.

I am owner of the sphere,
Of the seven stars and the polar year,
Of Cæsar's hand and Plato's brain,
Of Lord Christ's heart, and Shakspear's strain.[1]

There is another point on which we must also insist. Mysticism undoubtedly tends to weaken the reasoning faculties by representing them as things of inferior value. Individual mystics may parade the high esteem in which they hold the human mind. It is variously described by them as "the throne of the Godhead," "the candle of the Lord," man's highest function, the seat of authority, the voice of God, etc. But the reason they are speaking of is not what most people mean by the word. It is rather the intuitive Reason (with a capital R) of Plotinus, Schelling, and Coleridge, a sort of divine logic or special faculty for the discernment of truth at a bound, a power that despises the ordinary processes of ratiocination and is altogether independent of human knowledge and judgment. It is an alleged higher attribute, a "direct beholding," whereby the mystic views things from the transcendental standpoint, and gains an infallible intuition in which the purely intellectual faculty is disdainfully kicked aside and finally "dies in giving birth to Ecstasy." The writings of the contemplatives are full of contradictory affirmations on these questions, but their main standpoint is, I think, such as I have described. They have certain *feelings* about man's position in, and his beliefs concerning, the universe; but they prefer not to argue about it.

Reason is still regarded by many of them as "an inferior faculty" which must be "wholly mistrusted"; the faculty of receiving divine illumination, they say, the intuition which results in union with the Deity, is wholly unconnected with it. Coleridge, Emerson, Wordsworth, Schelling, and Browning all use language of this description. Especially in the eye of the Catholic mystic is ratiocination a stumbling-block in the way of his receiving these celestial favours. In its more exaggerated forms mysticism would go through life in blinkers —like Molinos' horse grinding out the corn, which he could not do properly unless he were blindfolded.

[1] Essay on History.

These ideas, even though they be held only to a limited extent, are clearly inimical to human progress and development. If ecstasy demands the abdication of our finite powers, and mystical faith regards the human intellect as a baneful obstructive—a thing, as Newman said, not known in paradise or heaven, and at the utmost but tolerated by the Church—then surely we are better without ecstasy. Renunciation immolating life and happiness, and abandoning sense and reason and all that they perceive or bring forth, will not help matters: it is but a jack-o'-lantern leading the soul nowhere in its journey through life. The abandonment of voluntary effort, the surrender of mind and will to a clerical agent or to the capricious action of ill-understood mental processes, constitute no less a dangerous throwing away of armour that is man's best protection against evil. It results in the over-development of the infantile elements of the mind, and in enervating those rational forces of the conscious volition which are the best friends and champions of right conduct.[1]

The moral failure of Catholicism, to which I have more than once made allusion, is chiefly due to the systematic enfeeblement by interested persons of the human intellect and will. Morality evolves, like everything else; but the road to improvement is a rough and toilsome one. Religion may lead the way—if she shows herself worthy of leadership—but she must be content, like the rest of the world, to go step by step. There are no short cuts to perfection, ethical or spiritual: neither priest nor mystic can wipe out sin or lighten our darkness at a stroke. Reason is the greatest of stabilizing influences, a moderating force that makes for peace; it will help, more than anything else, to make us view humanity as a whole and to recognize the folly, no less than the wickedness, of worldwide destruction.

It is generally admitted that a large amount of representative mystical teaching is not, to put it mildly, in the best interests of morality. The negative God of the pantheists, who is an absolute No-thing above all existence, an "irrational mind" or "super-rational unity" who "sees evil as good" and all

[1] See Thouless's *Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, p. 185.

things as fair and seemly and right—such a divinity would seem to be but a poor incentive to right living. If ineffable ignorance is the only road to wisdom, and the path of negation the highway to mystical illumination, it is useless our trying to learn or to act. Deity can possess no virtues, according to Aristotle [1]; moral qualities or moral actions are impossible for such a Being. "I can no more call God good," says the mystic Eckhart, "than I can call the sun black." [2] And the self-deifying mystic worshipping a God who is "above" all virtue is naturally tempted to apply this doctrine to himself: separate personality being a sin—a sort of robbery of God—his ethical sense, and the sense of personal responsibility, are weakened or destroyed. Positive evil is attenuated to a shadow, and action is represented as worse than useless. "What's the use of anything?" the higher contemplative asks in effect; and the lesser man adds as a corollary, "What's the harm of anything?" He has no difficulty in culling texts for an antinomian sermon from the writings of the highest authorities. Let me give a few sayings of eminent mystics, all of which may fairly be labelled "dangerous." He who lives in love can do no wrong (Amalric); Love God, and then do as thou wilt (St. Augustine); Sin is behovable—i.e. "necessary" or "profitable" (Juliana of Norwich, quoting Christ's words spoken to her in a dream); The highest part of our nature can take no stain (Plotinus); Evil is divine, just as goodness is divine, and must be loved and respected equally with goodness (Indian pantheists quoted by M. Maeterlinck); There is nothing evil but the evil will (Eckhart, in practical agreement with many Catholic theologians); God sees evil as good (Dionysius); Sins, being an occasion of humility, serve as a ladder to mount to heaven (Molinos, and, quite lately, that eminent Russian divine, Gregory Rasputin).

[1] It may seem a strange thing that this rather icy, empirical intellectualist, with his scientific brain and immense armoury of facts and observation, should have been the philosophical progenitor of a long line of mystical offspring; but so he was. As a matter of fact there was in him, as in not a few of our modern scientists, a strong mystical strain: he believed that θεωρία (contemplation) was the highest function of man (see Jones's *Studies in Mystical Religion*, p. 69).

[2] Vaughan's *Hours with the Mystics*, i. 282.

Madame Guyon thought that "virtually she could not sin, because the sin is in the Self, and the Self had been stripped off; all she now did was done in God, and done divinely."[1] This convenient doctrine, as we shall see, appears again and again among the visionaries of various creeds.

The Church from time to time formally condemned teaching of this kind, as well as the interpretations placed upon it; but mysticism—including Catholic mysticism—has always been full of it. The Papal "Pornocracy," and the conduct of her own clergy, afforded ample material for stinging retort to the Church's strictures; and the disputations of her moral theologians, wherein ethical theory was reduced to a state of hopeless confusion, and the laws of life and morality were "garbled away into a chaos of exceptions and distinctions," did not make things any better. "The problem for the Church," says Dean Inge, "was how to encourage the warm love and faith of the mystics without giving rein to these mischievous errors"; and I venture to say that she has never succeeded in solving it. The faith of the mystics was not always to her liking, and their love (as will appear presently) was apt to grow oppressively warm. From such premises as that he who loves can do no wrong all sorts of startling conclusions were drawn, and "immorality practised *in nomine caritatis*" was the rule, rather than the exception, among certain sects for many centuries. And the point to be borne in mind is that all these sects took religious conviction or mystical ecstasy as their spiritual guide, and many of them made religion the servant of their pleasures and the justification of sexual extravagances. All things were lawful, or even desirable, for a Christian in a state of grace, and he was not subject to the commandments by which other people were bound. The perfect person, said the Brethren of the Free Spirit and kindred fanatics of other creeds, is (like the gods of the mystic philosophers) beyond virtue; the body may be given absolute liberty. In fact, the man who strives after virtue is imperfect, and knows nothing of spiritual freedom.[2]

[1] *François de Fénelon*, by Lord St. Cyres, p. 122.
[2] *Studies in Mystical Religion*, by the Rev. R. Jones, ch. x.

St. Augustine told men to love God, and then to do as they willed; and modern Roman Catholic orthodoxy improves on this somewhat questionable advice by saying that we need not positively resist carnal or other temptation which is protracted, because this would be too much of a bore.[1] The antinomian mystical sects went still further and declared that, since in the highest mystical life the will is annihilated and evil is an illusion, whatever impulse surges up within us is a revelation of the Divine will, and the desires of nature should be satisfied so that freedom of the spirit may be unhindered. There is no law when the Spirit is in posssesion, and sin is impossible. Sin is the *will* to offend God (this resembles the Roman doctrine of the intention, to which I have alluded in my first book), and the will that becomes God's will cannot offend Him: everything the elect person does becomes a divine act. The instincts of the body take on a holy significance; a powerful instinct, being irresistible, must be of divine origin.[2] In this way, to borrow the illuminating words of the Roman Catholic mystic, Desmarets de St. Sorlin, "By an entire dissolution of ourselves, the virtue of the Holy Ghost flows into us, and we become wholly God, by a miraculous *deiformity*. . . . God then abides with the emotions of sensuality, all of which are sanctified."

"Desmarets did not confine himself to printing this doctrine with the privilege of the king and the approbation of the Archbishop" of Paris and other highly placed ecclesiastics. "Strongly supported by the Jesuits," says Michelet, "he ran from convent to convent preaching to the nuns. He related to them his dreams of devout gallantry, and inquired about their carnal temptations"; and generally made himself a director of female youth. He pleased the Jesuits by gaining over certain nuns of Port Royal, who turned traitors to that institution, and also by causing to be burned a rival prophet named Morin, a poor harmless visionary who believed that he was the Holy Ghost—a very common delusion in those days.[3]

[1] See my *Roman Mischief-Maker*, 3rd ed., p. 198.
[2] *Studies in Mystical Religion*, ch. x, xi.
[3] Michelet's *Priests, Women, and Families*, pp. 74–6.

The case of Desmarets de Sorlin was by no means an isolated one: doctrine and practice of this kind are common to all times and places. They permeated the early Church, which, according to the Rev. S. Baring-Gould, "trembled on the verge of becoming an immoral sect."[1] Christianity, says Renan, germinated in the corruption of great cities: it was not merely the actual scandals, but the *teaching* of immorality by the elders that troubled St. Paul and other spiritual leaders. In later years Irenæus, Jerome, and other saints followed suit in denouncing these evils, and it should be observed that the excesses appear to have been at their height when asceticism was in vogue. Human nature took its revenges, and the sensuous representations of the mystics and theologians tended to "nourish appetites which (according to the saints) we ought to starve."

Down to our day innumerable sects of the antinomian variety have sprung into existence in England, America, Germany, and other countries; but their chosen abode, their true spiritual home, is Russia. The "demoniacal visionaries" of that strange country—such as the Khlysti, followers of Rasputin, Jumpers, Eunuchs, and others too numerous to mention—demonstrate to the full the excesses and monstrosities of which debased mysticism is capable. The Bolsheviks have made full use of them in pushing their nihilistic theories. Some of these European and American brotherhoods took their stand on the Pauline doctrine conveyed in Romans viii. 2 and 1 Cor. ix. 1–5; and claimed that, being elected to a state of grace, they were liberated from the Law. And the curious thing about it all is that these sectaries appear to have really believed that their actions were justified by religious principles, and invested lust with a robe of sham piety. The female guests of the Marriage Supper in one of the American "holy communities" were common property; each lady was the "bride of all saints," and "dear in the hands of a stranger."

The proceedings of the visionaries belonging to Russian mystical sects beggar description. "Carnal sensuality is allied in monstrous union with religious mysticism," and the wildest

[1] *Study of St. Paul*, p. 459.

excesses of sexual theory and practice " are developed with a logical fearlessness peculiarly Russian."[1] Self-mutilating asceticism appears side by side with unbridled libertinism, as in a thousand old-world fanatical sects. There is the same compromise with superstition and sin, the same toleration of what is unholy, that is observable in more reputable religions.[2] Depravity is grafted on piety, concupiscence made to harmonize with religious emotion. " D'imaginer un amour qui ne porte point de delectation " (as Bossuet put it) is to indulge in chimeras and illusions. The amoristic pietist is not an agreeable figure, but he makes his appearance in all religions good and bad alike, and he always finds a following. " The simple souls," who gathered round Rasputin, says Dr. E. J. Dillon, " were amazed at the ease and pleasure with which they could qualify for the Kingdom of Heaven " ;[3] and other simple souls have gathered round other theologians and are no less charmed by the easy spirit of accommodation which tells them that the irksomeness of resistance to temptation is a sufficient excuse for succumbing to it. Rasputin was an unscrupulous charlatan, but many of his disciples (including the Czarina and—in a lesser degree—the Czar, whose mystical superstition was the main cause of his undoing) were perfectly sincere ; and the tenets and ritual of his faith were only those of the Khlysti and other mystical sects in Russia. " You must be united with me in soul and body," he told his female adherents, and such teaching, says Dr. Dillon, was " idealized as the essence of God's law " by these fanatics. Rasputin's theory that, " in order to repent efficaciously it behoves one first to sin," was borrowed from mystics of the Roman fold ;[4] and he gave his followers abundant encouragement—as Dr. Dillon shows us in very plain language indeed—to indulge the flesh and, as Pascal

[1] Cohen, 164 sq. ; and see Dr. E. J. Dillon's *Eclipse of Russia*.

[2] See *Cardinal Newman*, by R. H. Hutton, pp. 176–8.

[3] *The Eclipse of Russia*, by E. J. Dillon, pp. 204–8.

[4] Dr. Dillon (who is himself, I believe, a Roman Catholic) tells us of a bright Sunday-school girl who was catechised by her priest as to what one must do in order to benefit by the sacrament of penance. " You must first go and commit sin, your Reverence," was the prompt answer of this exceptionally intelligent catechumen.

expressed it, to "sin conscientiously." Rasputin's sodality never broke openly with the Orthodox Church, says Dr. Dillon, and its revolting orgies were "a fresh illustration of the recognized fact that mysticism and sensuality are so close akin that one feels tempted to call them correlates."

The dangers of excessive emotionalism in religion, on which Baron von Hügel animadverts with so much eloquence and force, can be illustrated much nearer home than Russia. Revivalism in Wales, as I know from personal observation, sometimes results in grave mental and moral evil. Earlier mystic Revivalists, like the Seekers and Ranters, thought that God was about to make a new revelation through certain "myraculous Apostles," and fancied that the mantle had fallen on their own shoulders. The Ranters said that *they* were God, and, according to Baxter, to this pretension "they conjoyned a cursed Doctrine of Libertinism, which brought them to all abominable filthiness of Life." Never in the world was there "a lowder warning to Professors of Religion to be humble," and to avoid "the spiritual Pride of ungrounded Novices in Religion."[1] In all countries throughout the ages there have always been plenty of prophets and "spiritual" persons who are puffed up with religious vanity and obtain popularity by preaching easy morality and investing loose conduct with a spiritual warranty. The cold *douche* of common sense is perhaps the best cure for these ecstatic ardours, and also for the "mystical" doctrine of go-as-you-please ethics, which is expounded in language that borders on gibberish, but is represented to be of divine inspiration. "He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification," says St. Paul; but surely a good deal depends on the quality of the prophesying. The verdict of history down to, and including, these later days emphatically condemns every type of religion which makes emotional strain, with the sensuous element largely predominating, the centre and foundation of its being.

[1] *Studies in Mystical Religion*, by the Rev. Rufus Jones, ch. xix.

CHAPTER XV

THE TWILIGHTS OF MYSTICISM

CHRISTIAN Mysticism has been said, with some truth, to have reached its apogee in the works of St. Augustine. It was that Prince of Mystics who bridged the gulf between the old world and the new, and, strange as it may seem, invested institutional religion with a prestige which it never before possessed, and organized the Church for her mighty work of empire-building. While Vandal hordes were sacking Rome, and the political work of centuries was falling in ruins, the great statesman-ecclesiastic pursued in Africa the even tenor of his way, and worked out that marvellous system which combines authority and mystical materialism in one vast structure of absolutism. He has been described as the first of the world's psychologists, and his keenly subjective view of "experience," his persistent (and rather inconsistent) championship of individualism and freedom of the spirit—wholly at variance with his strong authoritarian principles—endear him to our modern contemplatives. "God and the soul," he cries out in his *Soliloquies*; these two things, and these only. There is no inkling here of the indispensable human intermediary, the clerical director who holds the Papal whip over the mystic's head, and keeps his ecstasies within prescribed ecclesiastical bounds.

Before, and to a much greater extent after, St. Augustine's time religious mysticism had its ups and downs, and nowhere more so than in the Catholic Church. Christianity in its oldest and purest form was the exact antithesis of the rigid institutionalism which is best described as churchianity. The Kingdom of God which it preached was a mystical kingdom not of this earth, and in its terrestrial aspect it was a mystical society or fellowship (*κοινωνία*) of men and women who

sought communion with God, and experience of His actual presence, by faith and vision and purity of heart. The earthly Kingdom, as Mr. Rufus Jones says in his book on Mystical Religion, was "the life of God exhibited in human fellowship." To each true believer and well-doer the key of life was given as to an organ of the spirit, and the only authority he recognized was that of his own spiritual soul. Their sacrament was a mystical meal in honour of their dead Lord and Founder, not a mere carnal eating of the flesh of the god as in Pagan and Roman Catholic mystery-ritual. The machinery of officialism, elaborate liturgies and ceremony, were entirely absent: there was no priestly caste. Men distinguished by their intellectual gifts or spiritual qualifications naturally came to the front, as in every other community. There were no laity, no clergy, no order of privileged magicians or sacerdotal camarilla: a fool or a blackguard could not work pretended miracles, or impose his authority on his fellow-men, merely because he had undergone the laying on of hands, and was protected by the ægis of the Church. The prophets and evangelists and pastors were simply men who had proved themselves qualified for the work entrusted to them: all were equal in the faith, and their leadership depended entirely upon serviceability to the common cause.

But it was not long before a change came over the spirit of the scene. As their prophets failed them, and the springs of prophecy dried up, spiritual inspiration waned and its teachings fell into disrepute. Official machinery came more and more into play, and a carefully graded hierarchy imposed its discipline on minds that desired to work out their own destiny. Fellowship with Christ could only be claimed through an intermediate agent appointed by the episcopate. In short, a complete transformation, which I have already described elsewhere, was gradually effected. The "little flock" of mystical believers, awaiting in terror the world-catastrophe which they had been told would shortly overwhelm them, blossomed forth in course of time into a Cæsarian episcopate at whose nod emperors trembled, and whose commands—as its accredited ministers assure us is the case—Heaven itself

is on occasion forced to obey. A lower form of mysticism—what Germans call *mysticismus*—replaced the older and higher types; "authority" waved its magic wand, and clericalism came into its own.

The twilights of mysticism, like those of Nature, are recurrent and universal: its lower types often existed side by side, and contemporaneously, with the higher; they appeared, disappeared, and reappeared at intervals of varying length, and for no apparent reason. In Egypt and India, as in the West during later ages, they became degraded, under the guidance of interested priesthoods, into polytheism, dæmonism, magic, ritualism, and mechanical devotion of the "rotatory calabash" order. Astrology, theurgy, occult allegorism, theological chemistry, and alchemy luxuriated among the Jewish Kabbalists and their successors the Rosicrucians; esoteric and exclusive pretension passed all bounds. The morbid presentments of disordered imagination issued forth as the revelations of divine mysteries, springing like Jack-in-the-boxes from the Infinite—but always clothed in some mysterious way with celestial attributes. The purely personal pretends to be, or is mistaken for, the universal. Yet out of all this unpromising material experimental science gradually took its rise. The magician—European, Jewish, or Arabian, as the case might be—called alchemy to his aid, and so became a chemist. The despised astrologer was an astronomer in embryo; the physician, after being suppressed by the priest, allied himself with the astrologer, and finally braved the Church and started business on his own account. A humble man, sadly bullied by Popes and prelates,[1] he admitted that he knew very little; but patience and industry, added to modesty and independence of character, brought him knowledge by degrees. Mystic, magician, philosopher, and scientist have all been hunting the same quarry—the mystery of life and of the universe. They all felt the Church's heavy hand, and had to pay dear for their experiments, but their love and labour and sufferings have not gone wholly unrewarded.

[1] For this bullying see McCabe's *Bible in Europe*, pp. 84, 88; and Cohen's *Religion and Sex*, p. 70.

One very striking example of mystical decadence is afforded by Mohammedan Sufism. Wholly alien in spirit to the creed of the Prophet, it managed nevertheless to establish itself firmly, and to minister to the wants of the Oriental mind, within a century from Mohammed's death: and thenceforward it spread rapidly, especially in Persia. Its main principles were the familiar ones which characterize mysticism everywhere, but the pantheistic element predominated. The leading mystics of the sect claimed direct access to God through the intuitive faculty, but the inevitable "director" was not long in making his appearance in the shape of the Persian "Pir" (analogous to the Hindu Guru, to whom good Sufis yielded implicit obedience. Self-abandonment, indifference to the external world of illusion, self-annihilation, and disinterested love were the ideals of its contemplatives. The heavenly Unity to which they aspired was the palest of pantheistic abstractions, but their religious conceptions were expressed in language that was very much the reverse of abstract. Luscious imagery and erotic metaphor are employed freely to express their "divine" raptures. Women, wine, and wantonness are regarded as the best means to ecstasy. Like a good many Western mystics, they "attempted to give a sacramental or symbolic character to the indulgence of their passions," and the amatory note is continually apparent. Their temples were taverns, their psalms drinking-songs; under the fiery draught of alcoholic ecstasy the soul drinks in illumination; the whole universe reels, and everybody and everything in it gets hopelessly maudlin and gloriously tipsy.

> The Host is thy Beloved One—the wine annihilation,
> And in the fiery draught thy soul drinks in illumination.
> Up, soul! and drink with burning lip the wine of ecstasy,
> The drop should haste to lose itself in His unbounded sea.
> Our Friend holds out the royal wine, and bids us drink it up;
> The whole world is a drinking-house and everything a cup.
> Drunken even wisdom lies—all in revel sunken;
> Drunken are the earth and heaven; all the angels drunken.[1]

I doubt if this would be approved even by those rollicking Romanists of our day who chant in strident tones the praises

[1] Mahmoud's *Gulschen Ras*; see Vaughan's *Hours with the Mystics*, ii. 25.

of alcohol, but similar aberrations have appeared from time to time in Christian mysticism and among sects of all kinds. Some considered themselves "above" the obligations of morality, and considered that they were free to follow any impulse so long as it was potent. Others abandoned themselves to sheepish passivity, which they rightly called poverty of spirit, and wrongly regarded as a virtue. The Egyptian priests said that a single touch with the wing of their holy bird could charm the crocodile into torpor; and spiritual opiates of all kinds were in demand among sectarians to aid the soul in its "amorous quest" after the Good. Mysticism took on sensual and debasing forms; it relapsed into a "low curiosity" about details, an inquiry into non-essentials, and a confession of self-abasement. The mystic left the heights and, abandoning fundamentals, began asking for signs and worrying about the duration of his own soul, and other relatively unimportant things. Jesus, as Emerson reminds us, left no such interrogatories: "Never a moment did that sublime spirit speak in their *patois*. . . . God has no answer for such questions."

On the other hand, it soon became evident that the pantheistic speculations of the earlier mystics could never make any popular appeal. The writings of "Dionysius" and Erigena were too subtle and abstruse for general apprehension, and much too chilly to become a social gospel. In the tempestuous later Middle Age mysticism and Scholasticism reigned as rival powers, but the influence of the latter gradually weakened. The greater mystics struck out an independent line of their own: the downward slope of orthodox mysticism began and has continued, with occasional upward reactions, until this day. We have only to consider the frightful descent from the sublimities of St. Augustine to the fatuities and pruriences of St. Alphonsus Liguori to appreciate the greatness of its fall. For many centuries, too, the visible Church was sick with a complication of apparently mortal diseases. Harnack recites the legend of the mortal to whom it was granted to become whatever he wished. He rose through successive stages to be King, Kaiser, and Pope, and then wished to become God, when he fell back to his original misery. So

the Eastern Christians "tried to raise themselves above the temporal world, and finally to be as God in knowledge and felicity. And then at once they fell back into barbarism, ignorance, and filth." [1] "The body of Christianity," said Gerson in the fourteenth century, "is covered with sores from head to foot." Ignorance, imbecility, and corruption in high places shattered the unity of Christendom, and brought religion into contempt. Clergy and laity alike were infected with abominable vices. Sanctified ferocity shed blood right and left; the lay and clerical aristocracy of persecution, aided by mystic fanaticism, formed the pillars of the Inquisition, which employed the most horrible means and the vilest passion in the task of repressing freedom of mind and will.

The Counter-Reformation of the sixteenth century, carried out mainly by the Jesuits, purified matters somewhat, but left intellect and will-power more completely than ever at the mercy of clerical autocracy. Mysticism of a sort was encouraged, but, as Vaughan truly says, it was made the "innermost dungeon" of the Church's prison house. Orthodoxy found in the warm faith and spiritual uplifting of the mystic a valuable proselytizing agency; but when the latter went on to say that "God builds His temple in the heart on the ruins of churches and religion" priestcraft naturally grew alarmed and was out for his blood. The fervours of Ultramontanism are poles apart from the ecstatic ardours of the visionary. What the priests wanted was a mystical puppet, wound up by his spiritual "director," and kept going by machinery under clerical regulation. The finer and more ardent minds sought to follow the path of mental freedom, but the Church resented all such assertions of independence and struck the rebels down. Hence we find mysticism at one time praised and petted by those in authority, at another bullied and persecuted; and it not infrequently happens that these changes of fortune are experienced by the same mystic. Orthodoxy taught that man was a depraved worm who could only hope for salvation through sacraments and other mediatorial offices of a priest: mysticism regarded him as an

[1] See *An Agnostic's Apology*, by Leslie Stephen, p. 162.

emanation from Deity and as possessing *in his own soul* a kinship with the Divine. Two tendencies so diametrically opposed to each other were bound to come in conflict.

The chief example of mysticism in clerical fetters is to be found in sixteenth-century Spain. The Renaissance had brought about a revival of corrupt mysticism of the decadent Alexandrian type, seeking to ally itself with a still more corrupt Church, who, in her turn, reproduced the superstitions and the ritual observances of ancient paganism. Luther struck hard at the prevailing rottenness, and his preaching and pamphlets set the North aflame. Strong measures were necessary, or Romanism assuredly would perish of the moral diseases that infected her. Ecclesiastical authority must be restored, at any cost. Blood must be shed, and plenty of it; saintliness of life must be renewed, and saintly savagery given a free hand. In Spain, as Vaughan said, was found the chivalry of persecution: Philip II, with Torquemada and his crew, could be trusted to kindle the fires of fanaticism, and the grilling of Protestants began in 1559. Ignatius Loyola built up the most perfect machinery of clerical dominion that the world has ever known. In St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross, Rome found mystics of the subservient type she required. The relative freedom of thought which earlier mysticism enjoyed was abolished, and henceforth it was only to be tolerated so far as it served clerical ends. The student might learn, but the Church must direct his studies; the mystical lamp must be filled daily with ecclesiastical oil. The visionary must be the puppet of the director, who in his turn was the tool of his superiors. Mysticism of the speculative or introspective kind was a crime in orthodox eyes: even the pliant Teresa narrowly escaped imprisonment at Seville, and St. John of the Cross, typical ascetic and soul-sexton, was confined for nine months in a black hole at Toledo.

St. Teresa said that whenever the Lord commanded her to do one thing, and the confessor ordered the opposite, "the Divine guide enjoined obedience to the human; and would influence the mind of the confessor afterwards, so that he was moved to counsel what he had before forbidden." It would

never do, as Vaughan says, if enthusiasts were to have visions and revelations on their own account. St. John of the Cross warned the mystics that their only safeguard against delusion lay in perpetual and unreserved appeal to the director. If you have a vision, you must ask the confessor whether it has "steamed up from hell or been let down from heaven"; you must regard yourself, to borrow Vaughan's forcible language, as "a kind of parasitical insect or entozoon," hidden in the personality of the director. The difficulty was to find a method which should stimulate the feelings of the devotee to the highest pitch, while retaining him in complete subjection to the clerical will; and we must admit that both John and Teresa tackled the problem with a very fair measure of success.

All this is no mere academical question or historical study of a system that is dead and gone: it is a matter of practical concern to a good many people now living. The two main bulwarks of the Papacy, and of those peculiar forms of so-called Anglicanism and Nonconformity which counterfeit the Papacy, are the eucharist in its Latin form and the confessional; and both of these are now being vigorously pressed upon us by certain Anglo-Catholics. These people are at the present moment seeking to reintroduce into this country clericalism of that Roman type which men of the Nordic races have been for centuries striving to shake off their shoulders. They would interpose a human barrier against that direct access of the soul to God which most religious Englishmen and Scotsmen prize as their birthright, which Christ enjoined, and which is the essence of spiritual liberty. They would make an Italian pontiff our spiritual leader, and they prefer imperiously a claim to make fundamental alterations in the national religion. The avowed aim of their more advanced leaders is to "restore in its fulness" the authority of the director and the discipline of the Roman Church; and they insist that the good Catholic must confess and communicate "at such times as are appointed by his Director" (with a capital D, I would observe—as befits so august a personage).[1]

[1] See a letter from the Archbishop of Armagh in the *Morning Post* for August 3, 1923.

This type of religion has been tried for many centuries, and has completely failed to satisfy the tests to which it has been subjected: the history of human progress is the history of revolt against it.

Under these circumstances the problem of the confessional, and of the spiritual guide or director, once more becomes an insistent one: the view that the Latin Church is dead or done for, and that her influence is negligible, is no longer tenable. The principal thing we have to remember is that, while the confessor is only an ordinary human being, the functions he exercises in his directorial capacity are such as could only be performed adequately by a god. And directors are not always gods by any means, or even godlike persons. St. Teresa complained—and St. John of the Cross uttered similar warnings—that she and others suffered grievously from the vanity, ignorance, and incompetence of directors: she exhorted her nuns to be very careful in the selection of a confessor, claiming the right to change them as often as seemed desirable; and these "spiritual infidelities" became quite common. In country places and small towns the penitent, of course, has no choice: he must accept such ghostly counsellors as Mother Church chooses to send him. Many devout Catholics, while regarding "direction" as essential to the observance of their religion, have admitted that "not one priest in 10,000 is qualified to direct." That is the crux of the whole matter. "I do not put a man in place of God," said that pious and very competent Abbess, Mère Angélique of Port Royal. The Abbess, knowing a great deal about directors, had a very poor opinion of them and was disgusted with "their meddlesomeness and vulgar greed." An English Capuchin gave her some excellent advice: he told her "never to let a nun speak to a monk or friar, even if he preached like an angel." And the convent chaplains were no better.[1] That sagacious Capuchin knew very well that directors have other human failings besides vanity and incompetence. Some of them are men of indifferent character—men who (in Michelet's words) "have no wings, who crawl and cannot fly." The directorship, by such men, of

[1] *Studies in Modernism*, by the Rev. Alfred Fawkes, p. 391.

mystically minded ladies who combine spiritual ardour with an attractive personality, often gives rise to situations which require very careful handling. Even Fénelon, one of the really great directors, had a "coquetry worse than any woman's," if St. Simon is to be believed; and not all confessors are so "sober and discreet" as the courtly and fascinating "Monsieur de Cambrai." Fénelon tells us that his relationship with Madame Guyon was according to the laws of "that hieropathic affection, of which the female bosom is the seat, and the ministers of religion the objects."[1] But it sometimes happens that the seat of the affection, hieropathic or otherwise, is the bosom of the director, and its object some engaging member of the opposite sex. In that case the quality of the sentiment is apt—as common sense and experience teach, and theology admits—to undergo a change; the ghostly counsellor subsides, insensibly perhaps, into the lover; and, as the wise St. Augustine pertinently observes, *Spiritualis devotio convertitur in carnalem.* We have the accumulated knowledge and observation of many centuries to guide us in these matters, and human nature is just the same now as it always was. Yet Anglo-Romans, disregarding the plain warnings of the past as to the evils which always accompany enforced clerical celibacy,[2] are now trying once more to rivet its fetters upon the Church.

The deification, or quasi-deification, of the priestly magician and hierophant has always been a conspicuous feature in mystical religion, but it is a very pernicious doctrine. Clericalism naturally encourages it, but it is good neither for the priest or his penitents that he should be "a little god" (to borrow once more Origen's phrase) in the eyes of his flock. For this reason we should resist by every legitimate means in our power the attempts that are now being made to introduce

[1] *François de Fénelon*, by Lord St. Cyres, pp. 126–7.

[2] See *The History of Sacerdotal Celibacy*, by H. C. Lea; Michelet's *Priests, Women, and Families*; Lecky's *History of European Morals*, etc. According to Renan (quoted in the *Spectator*) women seem naturally and inevitably half in love with the celibate clergy. The great Tractarian, Dr. Pusey, had some very straight talks to Anglo-Romans on these vital matters; and the author of that chaste work, *The Priest in Absolution*, followed suit later.

into this country sacramentalism of the Papist variety. In the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation we have, as it always seems to me, mystical religion at its lowest and worst. The priest poses as a sort of mystery-man or wizard who (as he avers) " creates the Creator " every morning of his life, and this done, he proceeds to swallow Him whole. Sometimes it happens that the rôles of swallower and swallowed are reversed, in which case a somewhat Gilbertian situation may arise. One day that " incomparable virgin," St. Catherine of Siena, was standing by the bedside of her confessor, Raymond of Capua, who was sick of a fever. Suddenly and without any warning " our Saviour, who was in her, all at once and entirely swallowed her up, and instead of the Saint standing before Raymond, there stood no one but our Saviour, the Saint having wholly disappeared. Where was she gone to ? "[1] The mystery surrounding the affair has never, so far as I am aware, been satisfactorily dispelled.

Catholics are wont to pride themselves on their spirituality and refinement, but it is difficult to find these qualities in a dogmatic system which mingles spiritual and material elements in a hopeless confusion. The ecclesiastics who set out to vitalize mysticism by an infusion of crude materialism only succeeded in cramping and fouling it. Irenæus, Justin Martyr, Ambrose, Jerome, and a host of early churchmen favoured the spiritual view of the eucharistic ceremony ; and the best minds in Christianity follow them in rejecting with indignation that coarse, vulgar, and carnal interpretation which the fine mind of St. Augustine regarded as a grave impiety. Cicero tells us, in his treatise on the Nature of the Gods, that in all the religions of his time " there was no man so foolish as to pretend to eat his God." What is all this but mystical and religious decadence, spectacular indolence making a parade of its easy-going piety ? Does it not in some degree justify the opinion expressed by educated Orientals that " Christianity is a twilight religion " ? It is so much easier to placate the divinity by swallowing him whole like an oyster—though why the gods should find

[1] *Search the Scriptures*, by Father A. op Broek, published by Messrs. Washbourne with " the kind permission " of Cardinal Manning, p. 294.

gratification in this peculiar form of homage is a thing I have never been able to understand—to let a priest do your thinking for you, and to gain merit by simple confession and mechanical worship, than by pursuing steadfastly and unostentatiously the straight and narrow path. The essential baseness[1] of the transubstantiation theory can be illustrated in many ways, notably by the very unpleasant Stercoranean controversy of the tenth century, which has lasted unto this day. The great Arabian philosopher, Averroes, from whom the Scholastics derived much of their knowledge, entertained very strong opinions about this ritual offspring of a decadent mysticism. He said, "I have travelled over the world, and have found divers sects, but so degraded and sottish sect I never found as in the sect of Christians, because with their own teeth they devour the god whom they worship."[2]

It is not surprising that the sacerdotal sorcerer who makes these astounding claims to magical powers should give himself airs on the strength of his pretended performances. Let me supplement the examples I have already given with a few more of a similar nature, all of which can be verified as to names, dates, and places. Not only does the priest, "like the Holy Virgin, reproduce Jesus Christ," and therefore have pre-eminence over the Madonna; but "in a sense we stand above God, who must always and everywhere serve us, and at the consecration must descend from heaven upon the mass." The most ordinary priest may now occasionally be heard telling his flock that he is God speaking to them from the pulpit, and he "bears with dignity the burden of a power that makes him the equal of God himself." A book by an Archbishop of Salzburg is quoted as speaking of the priest's "omnipotence

[1] An interesting article by Dean Inge, in the *Quarterly Review* for July 1923, deals with the important work of Prof. Friedrich Heiler, of Marburg, who is considered to be the most outstanding among the younger German theologians. A Modernist, he has left the Church, but remains warmly attached to her. Like many others (the present writer included) he is much impressed with the progressive vulgarization of the Roman religion, and he frequently uses the phrase "vulgar Catholicism."

[2] Quoted in Collette's *Transubstantiation*, p. 123.

which is beyond that of God Himself." According to Liguori (*Selva*, p. 32), the priest, even though the Redeemer had not yet been in the world, "by pronouncing the words of consecration, would produce this great person of a Man-God." Nevertheless, though "the angels bow before" the clerical wizard, and disrespect towards him is "a sin against the Divine Trinity," we must not suppose that he is superior to human weaknesses. Should a priest display such failings, "it is the duty of the faithful to remain quiet," and to leave such matters to God and their "ecclesiastical superiors."

In the seventeenth century there was a reaction against the austerity of the Counter-Reformation. Religious mysticism grew more easy-going, courtly, and fashionable; it assumed an agreeable air of refined dilettantism. The chill rigidity, varied by intermittent fiery ardours, of the earlier ascetics gave place to amiable dissertations and meditations upon the saving qualities of Pure and Disinterested Love. Devout souls gave up flogging themselves, lived sociably and comfortably, and exchanged the hair shirt of penance for the garb of fashion. Jesuitism, with its easy morality and accommodating standard of virtue, preached the evil of Rigorism; and mysticism did not disdain polite society or the mansions of the great. Michelet describes in his inimitable way its dreams of devout gallantry; the tendernesses of saintly Lotharios, amateurs of passionate devotion inflamed with alternate erotic and pietistic fervours, artfully mingling the devotional style with the language of love, leaping by fits and starts from God to the Devil, and from the Devil back again to God. Augustinian theology gave place to a "tender dialectic of the love of God," which was much less gloomy and repellent than the older type of religion. God, no longer as of old, the stern Principal of a vast seminary, a spy on the watch for man's transgressions, a celestial Fowler intent on catching our poor feet in snares, became the Heavenly Beauty, whose physical perfections are minutely recorded in innumerable books of devotion. The soul, absorbed in contemplation of heavenly things, concentrates itself on the exceeding sweetness of a transcendental Beloved.

Christ, as Bossuet said, is "le plus beau des enfants des hommes," and is to be adored as such. Those two fascinating directors, St. François de Sales and Fénelon, preferred (as Lord St. Cyres tells us) the humble to the splendid virtues, the more useful to the more esteemed. The old mystical doctrines of renunciation and self-immolation were not abolished; but far above them was placed, as on a lofty pedestal, the mystical doctrine of Love. The Scholastics rightly made much of knowledge, but what, after all, was knowledge in comparison with Love? Love "rushed in where thought shrinks back aghast; it fills with meaning and reality that infinite bond where speculation is helpless to affirm or deny." Contemplation may purify the soul, but love deifies it, raising itself on its own wings to the level of the Beloved.[1]

All this being so, the quality of the devotee's love obviously becomes a problem of the greatest moment. In an age when, as Lord St. Cyres caustically observes, "Jesuit cheapjacks were accustomed to haggle with God for the price of a soul," discussion arose as to how much or how often one ought to love God, and whether "salvation might be more cheaply purchased at the price of one act of love in a lifetime." *Duplex est dilectio, una concupiscentiæ, alia amicitiæ; utrâque diliges Dominum Deum tuum* (Love is of two kinds, one of concupiscence [or eager desire], the other of friendship; thou shalt love the Lord thy God *with both*), said the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas.[2] A very large number of mystics showed a decided preference for the former, and there issued a veritable flood of mawkish devotional literature and sentimental religiosity. Deity was represented, as in the works of St. Bernard and other contemplatives of earlier days, as burning with celestial love (*Dei cœlesti amore flagrantis*), and the idea of the marriage between God and the soul—probably borrowed, as Dean Inge says, from the Greek Mysteries—was developed in language that was decidedly ardent. Originally the Divine Lover was represented to be Christ, and the Maiden (or Bride)

[1] *François de Fénelon*, by Viscount St. Cyres, p. 95.
[2] Ibid., p. 120.

was the Church. But religious romanticism called for a more intimate and personal connexion, so the individual soul was made the Bride.[1] From this it was but a step to argue that "the body as well as the soul is the bride of Christ," and celibate monks and nuns transferred "to the human person of Christ a measure of those feelings which could find no vent in their external lives."[2] The erotic imaginations of religious visionaries portrayed Christian Divinity as being hardly less amorous than Grecian Zeus or Apollo; and human life is depicted by a Catholic poetess as one long "spring-time of caresses" for the "fledglings of His tenderness." Meanwhile the prophets of Disinterested Love bade the sinner to sacrifice his conscious self and endure his own faults and defects with patience—a thing which the average sinner is seldom averse from doing.

The purest and most enduring forms of love, such as the love of a mother for her child, are natural growths and spontaneous in expression; they do not require for their production or sustenance the artificial stimuli, the perpetual titivation, which seem indispensable in the case of mystical love. Those who claim to be specially possessed of this love are for ever parading and talking about it, but the majority of them do not show a particularly loving temper or disposition. Baron von Hügel, after warning Catholics against excessive or mechanically induced emotionalism, tells us[3] that the specifically post-Tridentine Catholicism, "with its regimental seminarism, its predominantly controversial spirit, its suspiciousness and timidity," failed to win his love; he does not appear to have found either the religion or its ministers "intrinsically loveable"; and a very large number of his co-religionists express the same sentiments in fewer and more pointed words. Disinterested love may be an admirable subject for drawing-room conversation, but it is permissible to observe that many of us have sought for it vainly in the bosoms of its most ardent

[1] *Christian Mysticism*, by Dean Inge, p. 369.

[2] Ibid., p. 370.

[3] See Introduction to *The Mystical Element in Religion*, by Baron von Hügel.

professors. It is only, continues the Baron, "wheresoever some little sincerity exists" that his Church can conceivably be right; and he justly reproaches her for that "cowardice and opposition to the light" which are "certainly at work" within her ranks. A man "can no more fruitfully delegate his brains and his interest in the intellectual analysis and synthesis of religion than he can commission others to do his religious feeling and willing, his spiritual growth and combat, for him."

CHAPTER XVI

FOREGLEAMS OF CHRISTIANITY

THE universality of much religious doctrine, myth, tradition, and practice is a fact which critical research and comparative mythology make more and more clear every decade. Cardinal Newman admitted that there is little in the ethics of Christianity which the human mind may not reach by its own natural powers, and which has not in fact been anticipated ;[1] we now know that *all* of it has been anticipated, and many times over, and that much of the teaching embodied in mystic rites, and more or less occult philosophy, is thousands of years old.

The function of criticism, when dealing from the historical standpoint with the origins of religious belief, is to sift the true from the false in the evidence submitted to us in support of professed historical statements, and to show their influence and bearing on the formation of later religious systems. It is a regrettable fact that the early centuries of our era—the second century in particular—when Christianity as we now have it was in process of construction, were conspicuously lacking in the critical faculty. It was the great age of literary forgeries, and there were no critics of sufficient weight, knowledge, or insight to dam the stream of invention. The story of Jesus of Nazareth was, as a writer in the *Spectator* says, " misinterpreted, coloured, and perverted " again and again by polemical gospels and treatises written in the interests of various sects and schools. Narratives of His life appeared at intervals for which no sufficient warrant was forthcoming ; Scriptures were fabricated, altered, and amended. " It was the

[1] Letter to W. S. Lilly. See Robertson's *Christianity and Mythology*, p. 290.

birthtime of a lamentable mass of writing which took as its text things already set down, whether truly or falsely, in this or that place ; and upon these elaborated a congeries of fables, building one upon another with nothing but imagination to draw upon." Myths with no historical base were created, and woven by the ecclesiastical Church-builders into the framework of the nascent creed. "So the records," says the Rev. Alfred Fawkes,[1] "such as they were, of early Christianity shaped themselves ; the conditions of getting back to their sources is criticism ; and to complain that this criticism is often destructive is childish. Destruction must precede construction ; or, to put it more exactly, destruction and construction are two sides of one and the same thing."

Let us take a few examples of alleged events and of the principal beliefs current in the more important religions, and we shall be able to judge of their historical or spiritual value : we shall see that very few, if any, of them are the property of any creed, age, or race. We may fitly begin our survey with India, which is rightly regarded as the most ancient home of faiths now existing in concrete form. Brahmanism is now considered by scholars of recognized authority to be an Indianized form of some earlier non-Aryan cult ; and tradition makes Bacchus, the first founder of the Mysteries, bring them from India.[2] Emanations of the Deity, as we know, in many religions renounced their divine prerogatives and became incarnate for the sake of mankind, and "in order to deify by humanising God." These divinities made flesh were usually virgin-born ; and "the first Jesuit missionary to China discovered that the miraculous birth of Christ had been anticipated by Fuh-Ke, who was born 3,468 years before Jesus." [3]

The Indian God Vishnu, seeing that the transgressions of mankind were full to overflowing, wiped them out by willingly sacrificing himself and descending to earth in human form.

[1] The *Spectator*, April 19, 1924 ; and see also the issue of April 26, p. 675.

[2] King's *Gnostics and their Remains*, p. 42 ; Miss Harrison's *Prolegomena*, pp. 377–8.

[3] Maeterlinck's *Great Secret*, p. 68. Some Christian sectaries held that Christ only became God by His baptism : they made the voice from heaven say, "*This day* have I begotten thee."

His eighth incarnation, when sin and impiety had again spread over the world, was in Krishna, a Hindu divinity who was honoured as one of the highest among the gods long before the Christian era. He was son of "the Divine Lady Devaki," who is depicted as holding the infant deity in her arms; and the legends of his early life bear a startling resemblance to the Gospel narratives concerning Jesus. His uncle, King Kansa, a sort of Indian Herod, was warned by a divine voice that a son would be born in his house who would destroy him, so he determined to slaughter the Divine Lady's children. Krishna was born, and placed in a basket for winnowing corn (which some ingenious authors identify with a manger) and carried off to the country; and the tyrant, hearing of his escape, causes a massacre of infant children. Krishna, like the Persian Cyrus, is brought up among shepherds and cowherds and plays in the wilderness. Here he is tempted and assaulted by devils, and overcomes the great serpent, Kaliya, and treads upon (or bruises) his head. He is continually manifesting his divinity and yet disclaiming it. There are other stories and doctrines resembling those in the Gospel histories, which may be found in Mr. J. M. Robertson's *Christianity and Mythology*, 2nd edition, pp. 145–54.

The earliest sacred Indian books now extant, which contain the *legends* about Krishna's life and adventures—the Bhagavat and Vishnu Puranas—were written in the eighth or ninth centuries A.D.; and a fierce disputation has arisen concerning them. Orthodoxy naturally maintains that the stories were all borrowed from the Bible; but Mr. Robertson, in Part II of his *Christianity and Mythology*, makes out a strong case in favour of the view that these legends were part of a universal, or at any rate widely spread, mythology dating back to a remote antiquity. The much loftier and more inspired Bhagavat Gita, or Song of the Blessed, which contains the pantheistic teaching of Krishnaism, was *written down* many centuries before the Puranas, but chronological exactitude must not be expected in dealing with old Indian manuscripts. What does seem certain is that the written documents embody much early myth, legend, and doctrine, some of which is very old indeed.

The legend of Kansa (the Indian Herod), for example, may fairly be said to be established as a pre-Christian one.[1] The lore of ancient India, like that of the Druid and a good many other hierophants, was handed down from hand to mouth; and people were expressly forbidden to commit it to writing.[2] Knowledge of the truth, says the Mahabharata, is worthless if it has been learned from writing: if esoteric lore became the possession of the vulgar the power and incomes of the hierophants would be obviously imperilled. It seems probable that, as Max Müller indicated, Indian literature down to about 300 B.C. was mainly preserved by oral tradition. M. Maeterlinck justly, as I venture to think, ridicules the idea that the higher Indian teaching is comparatively recent, or that it has been "influenced by Judæo-Christian revelations."

The scanty stories of early Christian proselytizing in India must be received with caution: Eusebius quoting Church tradition is not a safe guide to follow. On the other hand, there is irrefragable evidence that the Indians sought to "apostolize" Egypt and other countries lying to the west of their own. The great Buddhist monarch Asoka, who lived in the third century B.C., sent forth missionaries who braved danger and hardship in spreading the light of the Buddhist gospel in other lands; and some of their narratives, translated from the Chinese, are still extant. Moreover, an edict of Asoka, graven on a rock tablet at Girnur in Guzerat, and discovered last century, shows that Buddhism was planted in the dominions of the Seleucidæ and the Ptolemies (Palestine, Egypt, etc.) long before our era. The tablet states that the kings of those countries "have been induced to allow" the people there, "and in foreign countries everywhere, to follow the doctrine of the religion of Devanipya, wheresoever it reacheth."[3] The Essenes, who, according to Josephus, greatly resembled the Buddhist monks,—they were described as a sect "where no birth ever takes place"—are said by Pliny to have been established on the shores of the Dead Sea for "thousands

[1] *Christianity and Mythology*, pp. 157, 166, 181.
[2] Ibid., p. 143.
[3] King's *Gnostics and their Remains*, p. 51.

of years" before his time. A steady stream of Oriental life and influences was at that time continuously passing westward from India.[1]

The ninth incarnation of Vishnu was in the Buddha Gautama, or Sakya-Muni, who is said to have lived in the sixth century B.C. He is regarded by many scholars as an historical personage, though others take the opposite view; and we have it on the early authority of St. Jerome that Hindus then taught that their Buddha was Virgin-born. He was sinless and omniscient, supernaturally conceived, a worker of miracles, and the Saviour of the world; an ancient sage prophesied his sublime career, and his praise was sung by choirs of Indian angels.[2] Born at Kapilavastu of royal parents, he, like Christ, "was rich, but for men's sake became poor," and preached the way of holiness to the people who gathered around him. His last exhortation to his loving disciples was, "Work out your salvation with diligence."

Originally, it would appear, Buddhism had no priesthood in our modern sense of the word; but this (as usually happens) was not long in making its appearance, and now the religion has, in the Dalai Lama, a Pope possessing spiritual and temporal powers, an organized and carefully graded priesthood, and a liturgy of mechanical devotion surpassing that of Rome. Images of saints, rosaries, incense, sacred bells, relics, holy water, confessions, gorgeous processions headed by tonsured clerics, monastic institutions where boys of seven or eight are handed over to the lamas for what is a sort of living death—all these things were considered by a learned professor (who, by the way, thought that Krishnaism was stolen from Christianity) to have been borrowed from Buddhism.[3] Newman (*Essay on Development*, p. 373) largely shares this view, but the Cardinal is careful to assure us that the religious elements borrowed were "sanctified by their adoption into the Church." The Buddha himself, we are told, would not have approved of all this lavish ceremonialism; and something of the same

[1] King's *Gnostics and their Remains*, Part I.

[2] *A Concise History of Religion*, by F. J. Gould, vol. i, p. 138.

[3] *Christianity and Mythology*, p. 165.

sort has been said about another great religion and its Founder. Lastly, it seems worth noting that this lofty Indian creed, which has for centuries exercised so vast an influence on the human race, has—officially at any rate—disappeared from the country that gave it birth.

Plato's occasional incursions into the field of theosophy would seem to lend colour to the theory that he was not uninfluenced by Oriental mysticism, Indian in particular. Cicero tells us how Plato travelled through Egypt in order to gain information about the religious beliefs and practices of Eastern sages. The celebrated passages in the *Timæus* give us a remarkable picture of the universe framed as a cross, which has been held by many Christians to prefigure their religion. It is there recorded how the Creator of the world, "being free from jealousy" (the Hebrew Jehovah describes Himself as "a jealous God"), desired that all things should be as like himself as they could be, and to this end he put intelligence into soul, and soul into body. The plan of the eternal God, about the God that was to be, was that there should be "one only-begotten heaven" (92). He created the universe in the form of a globe (36) and out of three elements, which were mingled and divided lengthwise into two parts, which he joined together in the form of a cross (the Greek letter X) and bent into a circular form, the parts whereof revolved upon the same axis. When the Father and Creator saw the creature he had made moving and living he rejoiced, and in his joy determined to make the copy more like the original (37). The created universe was made by him in the likeness of the original, and the animals were fashioned after the nature of the pattern (38). He made the human soul of the same elements as the universal (41). Justin Martyr, who thought Plato was "a Christian before Christ," has the following interesting remarks on these passages. "Plato in his *Timæus*, philosophising about the Son of God, says, 'He expressed him upon the universe in the figure of the letter X' . . . Plato said that the power next to the Supreme God was decussated or figured in the shape of a cross upon the universe . . . he gives the second place to the Logos (Word) of God decussated upon the world in the figure of a cross; and

the third place he assigns to the Spirit."[1] Justin Martyr imagined that Plato stole these notions from Moses, a fantastic theory that was shared by Philo-Judæus, who called Plato "the Attic Moses."

The ancients, as various writers show, pictured the Universe, or mundane soul, as a X, sometimes comprehended in a circle. Another significant passage in Plato's works was also interpreted by early Christian writers as referring to Christ. The "Just One" (a phrase frequently found in the New Testament), says Glaucon, addressing Socrates, "will be scourged, racked, fettered . . . and at last, after suffering every kind of torture, will be crucified."[2] "Prometheus," says Emerson, "is the Jesus of the old mythology. He is the friend of man; stands between the unjust 'justice' of the Eternal Father and the race of mortals; and readily suffers all things on their account."

Let me give a few more examples, from the many that exist, of early myth and religious legend bearing on the subject in hand. The anticipations of Christian teaching by the ancient Egyptians alone are very numerous, and some of them have already been cited in Chapter VIII of this book. Serapis, the saviour and leader of souls, who raised the dead and led souls to the light, is one from whose sway we can never escape, "but he will save us, and even after death we shall be the objects of his providence": he also purifies the soul with wisdom.[3] Osiris gave from his well "a living water" to the thirsty soul, reviving it and springing up, as Miss Harrison says (*Prolegomena*, p. 576), to everlasting life: he took away sin, and judged the dead at the last judgment. He carried the shepherd's crook or crozier, and is sometimes represented, along with other gods, with a scourge in his hand. He "was the incarnation of the great primeval god who created the heavens and earth," and through his sufferings (distinctly called the "Passion"), death, and resurrection his worshippers were assured of a happy life beyond the grave. His consort Isis sought long and anxiously for her lost son, whom she had brought forth in a cluster of

[1] *First Apology*, translated by Bishop Kaye, lxxvii—in other editions, lx.
[2] *Republic*, ii. 362—translated by Davies and Vaughan.
[3] Aristides' *Encomium of Serapis*—see Legge, i. 58, 60.

bulrushes, " and when the little boy is found Isis rejoices, and the priests exult." [1] Horus was born, like Mithras, on December 25, the date subsequently adopted by the founders of Christianity for the birth of Christ ; and when the child was ill, Thoth anointed his eyes with spittle.

Discoveries made quite recently by German excavators on the site of Assur, the primitive capital of Assyria, have added new and suggestive facts to the world's growing stock of knowledge ; and Professor S. Langton has published the results in his important work, *The Babylonian Epic of Creation.* Their significance may be, probably will be, overestimated, but it is undeniably great. We knew that the Egyptian Osiris and the Asiatic god, Tammuz, were slain, sojourned in the lower world, and returned to the upper world ; and these legends are now shown to have been existing in Assyria. There were mystery-dramas and sacramental cults among the Assyrians long before the Grecian ones. Their god, Lillu, was imprisoned in the lower world, and his mother and sister made lamentation for him, as happened in the more familiar Tammuz cult.[2] Bel-Marduk, a solar deity of Assyria and Babylonia, " the Merciful One in whose power it is to give life," whom all men ought to praise, " created mankind that he might purchase their ransom " (*Babylonian Epic*, pp. 195–6). He was nursed by the mother goddess (54) and afterwards bound (56), maltreated and wounded, and slain. With him was a malefactor who was also bound, smitten, and slain, and goes to the lower world with Bel (39, 54). After his death, Bel's body was stripped of its clothing : garments coloured with his blood are conveyed by a " magi," and his grave-clothes appear in the ritual. The goddess who was with him, Bel's wife or mother (53), goes weeping and wailing to the gate of the grave seeking him (35, 37, 49) : women weep at his wounding (56). Bel descends into the lower world, and prayer is made that he may rise again. There is a tumult and lamentation because Bel

[1] Legge, i. 70 ; Budge's *Literature of the Egyptians*, pp. 12, 90. Isis conceived Horus while she fluttered in the form of a hawk over the corpse of her dead husband ; see Frazer's *Golden Bough*, abridged edition, p. 364.

[2] *Babylonian Epic*, p. 215.

was bound and slain, and complaint is made of his unjust suffering and death. The mother goddess prays for his resurrection (55). Finally the door of the tomb is forced by the gods (56), and Bel is brought back to life and the upper world. The writer of the tablet concludes by uttering the most violent imprecations, and calling down the wrath of heaven upon anyone who shall interfere with what he has written—just as St. John does in Rev. xxii. 18–19.

In *Stories of the High Priests of Memphis*, by Professor F. Ll. Griffith, there is a remarkable tale about the precocious wisdom of the son of Osiris. "The child grew big, he grew strong, he was sent to school . . . he rivalled the scribe who had been appointed to teach him. . . . The child began to speak . . . with the scribes of the House of Life [the temple of Ptah (?); all who heard him were] lost in wonder at him." Mr. Griffith says that the existing text of the Second Tale of Khamuas, in which this appears, was probably written down about the middle of the first century A.D.; but the story it tells is almost certainly of much older date, and there is no valid reason for supposing that it was derived from Christian sources. Khamuas flourished about 1250 B.C.

The origins of the Trinitarian idea are lost in the mists of antiquity. It is quite clear, says Sir E. Wallis Budge, that "all the great priesthoods believed in the existence of one great, almighty, eternal, inscrutable, incomprehensible, and self-existent god, who existed somewhere when there was neither heaven nor earth, and before gods, men, animals, and death had come into being." The Pyramid Texts (6th Dynasty) and later documents show that the priests of Heliopolis believed that their god Tem was "the self-existent and eternal god," and that from his body was produced the FIRST TRIAD, or Trinity of Tem, Shu, and Tefnut.[1] Other Egyptian Trinities were those of Nu, Tum, and Ra; Ptah, Horus (the "Beloved Son" of Osiris), and Thoth, who afterwards formed the triad of Osiris, Isis, and Horus. Osiris says, in a papyrus of the fourth century B.C., "Thus from one god I became three

[1] Budge's *History of the Egyptian People*, p. 168.

gods" (Serapis, Isis, and Horus).[1] There were Trinities in the Greek, Vedic, Assyrian, and Hindu religions, and one clergyman contended that the Indian and all other Triad systems were vestiges of an original pure revelation.[2]

Besides Osiris, Krishna, Hercules, Dionysus, Hermes, Adonis, the Assyrian Bel-Marduk, Orpheus, the Thracian Zamolxis, Mithras, Apollo, and other heathen divinities all descended into hell and came back to earth again. The triple composition of man as body, soul, and spirit is an old Egyptian theory. The inhabitants of the nether world in the land of the Pharaohs resembled those of the orthodox Hell; and the Egyptian demon Set of "the Stinking Face"—who, like other demons, used very bad language—reappeared after being overthrown and slain as a great hissing serpent. The morality preached by the ancient Egyptians was of a high order. So far back as 4000 B.C., we find a book of admirable ethical precepts, *The Instruction of Ke-Gemmi*. It is unfortunate that only a fragment of it exists, because it contains exhortations against mischief-making which might be read with profit by certain modern ecclesiastics. "Beware of making strife," says this excellent theologian, "for one knoweth not the things which the God will do when he punisheth."

Ptah-hetep's *Maxims*—the oldest book in the world—and the later Maxims of Ani, are also no less instructive than they are attractive. They inculcate the love of truth, and some of them, like Ke-Gemmi, condemn the fomenters of strife and those who adopt the methods of terrorism. To "terrify the people" is an abominable thing. Ptah-hetep would also appear to have been a sort of early Prohibitionist. "Frequent not the house where men drink beer," he cries; because, if you do, you may fall down and break your bones, and nobody will help you up. "The sanctuary of God abhorreth noisy demonstrations," he says; and "when thou offerest up offerings to thy God, beware lest thou offer things that are an abomination to him." "Chatter not" during divine service, and "chant not God's offices too loudly." Let us hope, too, that the

[1] Legge's *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, i. 88.
[2] See Robertson's *Christianity and Mythology*, p. 139.

ancient Egyptians were as moral as the epitaphs on their tombs suggest: the ethics of these inscriptions approximate closely to those of the Sermon on the Mount.

Among the ancient Babylonians we find a no less lofty standard of virtue exhibited in the Code of Hammurabi, about 2080 B.C. Mr. Chilperic Edwards (*The Hammurabi Code*, vi) thinks that both the Code and the Mosaic Law were based on the earlier, and recently discovered, Sumerian law-code, and that the Hebrew legislation was in direct descent from that of Hammurabi. The two codes together form the oldest system of laws known in the world. Professor Breasted mentions in his *History of Egypt*, p. 205, a grim prophecy by Ipuwer, an early Egyptian Jeremiah. The seer foretells coming ruin, which is to be followed by the advent of a Messiah who shall be "the shepherd of all people, with no evil in his heart," and shall save them from their enemies. Professor Breasted thinks that Ipuwer furnished the Hebrews with the form, and to some degree the content, of their Messianic prophecy. The tablets and art treasures recently unearthed in Mesopotamia show that a very high civilization already existed in those regions about 4000 B.C.—a civilization probably anterior to that of the Egyptians; and their religious system would appear to have been correspondingly developed.

In the fourteenth century B.C. we find that very remarkable "heretic," theistic philosopher, moral and religious reformer, prophet and conscientious objector, King Akhnaton or Amenhetep IV, who was the father-in-law of the much-advertised Tutankhamen. He worshipped, we are told, the "Formless Essence, the living and loving Force which pervades all things, all space, and all time." He urged his people to address their Maker as "Our Father who art in Heaven," and to worship Him "in truth, and simply, without excess of ceremonial." To him the birds seemed to be singing in adoration of their Creator, and the fish leaped up from the stream in praise of God. "He based the universal sway of God on His fatherly care of all men alike, and pointed out to the proud and exclusive Egyptian the all-embracing bounty of our common Father."

He was the first prophet of history.[1] David appears to have found in Akhnaton's beautiful Hymn to the Sun inspiration for his Psalm civ.

The Egyptian king also anticipated the Hebrews by forbidding the making of graven images to represent Deity, who, being a beneficent Providence, a God of pure spirit, of utter goodness and all-pervading love, could not be represented thus. He called himself the "Son of God," the Beloved Son of Aten; and it may perhaps be said that "he laid the foundations of Christianity." The Book of Exodus, written some centuries later, is regarded by scholars as a Hebrew version of the story of Akhnaton's heroic efforts, and tragic failure, to reform religion. Moses, St. Stephen tell us in Acts vii. 22, was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians"; and an Anglican divine and theological professor thinks that the Hebrew lawgiver learned in the Egyptian court, about a hundred years after Akhnaton's death, the story, the philosophy, and the plans of the great prince and theist who had failed. Moses failed in like manner to raise the people under his charge to the level of his lofty hopes, but his Moral Decalogue remained; and, 600 years after its establishment as the only set of Divine laws for the Jews, "Jesus declared that the Deuteronomic Corollary (Deut. vi.) of Moses's Decalogue, and of Akhnaton's Theism,—namely, Universal Unity—was the First Law for all the Universe."[2] Such, says Dr. Duff, has been Egypt's Spiritual Legacy for to-day; "nor is this legacy the only one that so-called heathen and heretic men have sent to us."

Greek, Mithraic, and other heathen anticipations of the Roman eucharist are set forth in chapter viii. of my last book. A curious parallel to the narrative of Jesus riding "an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass" (Matt. xxi. 5, 7; Zechariah ix. 9) is to be found in Greek mythology. Dionysus, driven mad by Here, met in his wanderings two asses, and rode upon one (or both) of them across a vast morass. Mr. Robertson (*Christianity and Mythology*, p. 339) thinks that this myth may

[1] Breasted's *History of Egypt*, p. 376 sq.

[2] See an article by the Rev. Archibald Duff, D.D. and theological Professor, in the *Hibbert Journal* for January 1924.

explain the fact that one of the Greek signs for Cancer in the Zodiac was two asses, a copy of the Babylonian Ass and Foal sign. Dionysus also changed water into wine. Poseidon walked upon the waters, "a peaceful ruler of the realm of billows." Hermes Kriophoros, bearing a ram on his shoulders, is sometimes taken as an artistic prefigurement of the Good Shepherd; but it seems more probable that the Greek divinity, in his rôle of cattle-lifter, had stolen the ram and was making off with his booty.

The problems which confront the honest student of mythology in its relation to what is now regarded as orthodox religion are very intricate ones: to tackle them effectively one would require to have the vision of a seer who can look backwards as well as forwards, and the possession of what is fitly termed the "historical imagination." Anthropology and comparative mythology are working hard to clear the ground, but a vast amount yet remains to do. The creation-stories of uncivilized peoples, as well as the more developed conceptions of Indians and Greeks, all seem to support the theory that at the back of their imaginings lay some common fund of primitive culture. One very important doctrine of modern orthodoxy, that of the divine immanence in the material universe, is a clear adaptation of ancient philosophy, chiefly Indian. The notion of the immanent-universal, existing in the individual and the singular, appears in Aristotle's critique of Plato's Idea-theory; and is probably an offspring of old Eastern philosophy. Immanence is described as the positive element in pantheism, but, standing alone, it was too pantheistic for the theologians, so they adopted the notion of the Immanent-Transcendent, the Whole that is indwelling in the external world, but yet transcends it. Reason and imagination, working together, thus issue in a kind of "disembodied rationalism." It is difficult to find any connexion between these cobwebs of the human brain and the teaching given in the Synoptic Gospels: the Christ there depicted was certainly no metaphysician. "Apocalyptic thought," as Tyrrell says, "knew nothing of these hypostatised abstractions, these animated class-notions." The minds of the early Christians were not occupied in such chilly problems; they

were thinking about the world-catastrophe that was shortly to overwhelm them.

Whether the Fathers of the Church were right, or wrong, in their contention that the wicked devils invented Christian doctrines and stories beforehand in order to discredit Christianity, I must leave the reader to determine for himself. What we want to know is how the primitive cosmogonies and theogonies came into existence. Were they original creations or merely the " beggarly rudiments," the " humble and haggard heirs " of earlier and profoundly esoteric doctrines said to have been reserved for the initiated few ? We have it on record that the ancient lore of India, and perhaps that of Egypt, was based on fundamental agnosticism ; but we may well believe that, as time went on, the pundits found that this was not enough if they were to preserve their prestige and authority over the people. It was no use telling the simple tiller of the soil that everything was Illusion, that we knew nothing and never could know anything about the transcendental. He would probably reply, " If, as you admit, you know nothing yourself, what is the use of your trying to teach me ? " Hence clericalism was obliged then, as always, to pretend to a knowledge which it did not possess : the bottomless abyss of nescience had to be filled in and populated with beings within the comprehension of the ordinary mind. The pure Absolute, or cold abstraction which repelled mankind's advances, had to be replaced by a more congenial anthropomorphism. Infinite Nescience aroused itself from its slumbers and split itself into parts, which grew smaller and smaller as time rolled on. Metaphysical and " tangled " triads became objectivized Trinities, and the functions and qualities of the component divinities were personified in numberless Emanations rayed out (as in Neo-Platonism) from the central fount of Being. From these it was an easy transition to the gods and goddesses of heathen mythology, who make a ready appeal to the popular intelligence, and have definite attributes and powers operating in clearly marked out spheres. There was a progressive decadence, which seems to have been coincident with the growth of priestcraft ; the process was of course a gradual one, and

the links in the chain of transition are not always visible to our eyes, though we have glimpses now and then of the influences at work. The arguments by which men defended religious deceptions practised upon the populace were doubtless those we often hear nowadays in the mouths of orthodox apologists.

When Dean Inge says that the history of religions is generally a history of decline, and that Christianity has suffered the same fate, he is speaking no more than the bare truth. Another Modernist, the late Rev. T. K. Cheyne, D.D., editor of the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, Oriel Professor of Interpretation, and Canon of Rochester, entertained the most startlingly unorthodox views as to the mythic origins of many incidents recorded in the New Testament; and his theories are now accepted by many churchmen. How far legend has crystallized into dogma, and myth has been translated into historical fact, is a question on which people will differ for many a day yet to come; but certain it is that the powerful and growing Modernist party in both the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches take a more and more symbolic and mystical view of the Gospel narrative. We are now told that legends, myths, and fairy-tales are "better than history," in that they may convey to people truths more profound than historical verity. A dream-picture may bring home to us that inner psychological truth by which men live, better than a "bald and unconvincing narrative" of unverifiable events. To take one instance, there would appear to be Divine warranty in Matt. xii. 40 for the story of Jonah and the whale; but the Dean of St. Paul's regards the tale as a myth, and says it has "no more to do with Christian religion than Jack and the Beanstalk."[1] Accordingly English Modernism is subjecting the life, character, and personality of Divine Personages to a sort of critical X-ray process, and (as Canon Barnes informs us) is now busy "hammering out" a new system of theology which is to be the orthodoxy of the future. How long it will be before the operation has to be repeated, and a fresh theological system constructed, I am not prepared to hazard a guess.

Meanwhile, "the Sons of God" (as Roman Catholics style

[1] See the *Evening Standard*, August 25, 1921.

themselves) show no sign of abating their pretensions. Their Church still insists that her basic theology was sent down from on high upon a chosen few, and that it remains her "exclusive possession": there can be no "hammering out" afresh in her case. She may have borrowed here and there from the accumulated mass of ancient myth and legend lying at the back of her own religion, but spiritual pride forbids the admission that the borrowing was of essentials, and in any case it was "sanctified" by the Church's use of the alien material. I do humbly suggest, however, that it is about time for "Catholics" of all kinds to drop the dogmatic air and the high note of an all-round superiority. Mr. G. K. Chesterton asserted not long ago that such assumption of superiority is not only a sin but "a thing cowardly and corrupting like a drug"; yet a few months later we find him describing his religious opponents as "Protestant dogs." Mr. Hilaire Belloc, not to be outdone by his fighting partner in the sectarian ring, protested at Birmingham that "in all things of this earth we Catholics are the superiors all round"; and he capped this by writing, "We may doubtfully admit some sceptics for our equals, but certainly not others." [1] "I shall never be meek," Cardinal Manning once said in a sudden access of self-revealing candour, and a very considerable body of his co-religionists would appear to be in the same sad case. "Bethink ye," as Oliver Cromwell said, "bethink ye, in the bowels of Christ, that ye may be mistaken!"

[1] *Evening Standard*, October 31 and December 20, 1923.

CHAPTER XVII

OSCULATORY MYSTICISM

THE degradation of a great religion which, in the words of Dean Inge, "began as a republication of the purest prophetic teaching," is not a pleasant subject to dwell upon; but it seems expedient to indicate how easy is the fatal descent from the higher mysticism to the lower. The hierophant may tell us that pietistic sentimentalism (which the vulgar call "religion") is merely the expression of abstract conceptions in terms which are intelligible to the man in the street; but the trouble is that the coarse symbolism of which he makes such free use soon ousts in the popular imagination the mystical idea it was intended to convey. The transcendental core is repudiated or forgotten, the material husk alone remains. The doctrine of Divine Love, which mystics of all religions expound with a tireless iteration, is formulated in language that almost makes one's hair stand on end; and we have seen how Mohammedan Sufis in the East, certain Roman Catholic visionaries and Protestant sectarians in the West, invested the indulgence of their passions with a sacramental or quasi-sacramental value. They fancied that they might raise the lower by "spiritualizing" it, but only ended in debasing the higher by materializing it.

Erotic mysticism abounds in the mystical writings of antiquity, but the noblest contemplatives would have none of it. The Christian model for a vast amount of amatory twaddle with a spice of religion in it has always been the Song of Solomon, an ancient Hebrew love-ballad, or pastoral idyll,[1]

[1] A Spanish writer, Louis de Leon, who had the temerity to express this view, got five years' penal servitude for it. Another Spaniard, Juan de Angelis, who held forth at length, and with the usual gusto, on the *nuptiæ spirituales*, quotes freely from Lucretius, Ovid, Tibullus, and Martial. None of these eminent poets, if I remember rightly, was greatly preoccupied with spiritual love. (See Inge's *Christian Mysticism*, p. 216.)

about a very handsome man and a dark lady whose attractions had the good fortune to earn the praises of "threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number" (vi. 9). Mother Church has displayed much talent in allegorizing this very ardent poem, and may even be said to have succeeded in the difficult task of outsinging Solomon himself. There is much mystical writing that is touching, elevated, and beautiful, a serious attempt to give utterance to the unutterable; but a great deal more of it consists of maudlin erotic babble disguised as religious symbolism, and confounding animal instinct with divine exaltation. *Fulcite me floribus, quia amore langueo* (support me with flowers —not "flagons," as in our Authorized Version—because I languish for love) is the favourite text; and the dealers in ecstasies and spiritual narcotics have preached upon it *ad nauseam.*

Romanists are fond of contrasting the engaging fervour of their religion with the chilly austerity of Protestantism, which is supposed to consider that true piety consists chiefly in renting a pew. They say that the heretic does not know how to love God as they love Him, and I propose to give some reasons for my belief that the heretic is rather to be congratulated on his ignorance. The saner Protestant does not think that it is necessary, in order to be pious, to remain in a state of perpetual transports. The sensuous imagery, which, as Vaughan says, is "borrowed from love and wine—the kisses, bedchambers, and winecellars of the soul"—has no attractions for him. The Catholic mystic, on the other hand, revels in a sentimental religiosity which is simply ancient Hindu sensuousness introduced into the Church, sometimes in exaggerated form, through the Greek mystery-cults, Alexandrian Gnosticism, and other Oriental sources. It is wholly foreign to the finest Greek mysticism: Plato and Aristotle knew nothing of it, and many of the finest intellects in the Roman Church have deplored its manifestations in her ranks. They would restore the Father to the rightful place He occupied before popular or "vulgar" religion had aggrandized the Virgin and the saints, and had relegated pure Deity, apart from its human

manifestations, to a subordinate position.[1] The love of that great Christian mystic, St. Clement of Alexandria—to take one instance—was not for the human Jesus, but for the ideal Logos or Word; his Platonism "raised him high above the gross emotions of a carnal world"; he had no wish to taste the joys of Spiritual Marriage, or "the chaste embraces of the Song of Songs."[2] But such transcendentalism will not satisfy the "tumultuous cravings" of the impassioned Papist, who has no Platonic serenity in his composition. The Catholic saint, with a Paganized halo round his tonsured poll, is said to be a blend of "serpentine cunning and rapturous love towards Jesus"; and in his efforts to give utterance to his rapture he exhausts the vocabulary of passion. The most powerful of instincts, that of sex, with a false glamour of sanctity thrown over it, is pressed into the Church's service with results that may play havoc with mind and soul.

In mystical writers, as Bossuet pointed out, we find aversion and inclination to sexual excesses in varying proportion. Negative mysticism found its natural outlet in two opposite directions, asceticism and unbridled licence, both of which have their roots in the same soil. The Church strove on one side to suppress sexual feeling, and a "reversed sensualism," the sensualism of the imagination, was the inevitable consequence of the attempt to drive natural instincts underground. Catholic piety might profess to regard ordinary love as an indecency, a sickness of the soul (as Fénelon appears to have thought), but the material side of human nature revenged itself by an access of devotional amorosity. "Ecce Sponsus venit: exite obviam ei," the mystics cried, and they celebrated the Bridegroom's coming with a torrent of sentimental rhapsodies. The erotic or osculatory visionary, who is in many cases a lady, is a slightly comic and very tiresome person. He (or she) is represented as for ever kissing and embracing somebody or something, and being kissed and embraced in return. Sometimes he embraces the Divine essence in trance; at another

[1] "God the Father does not interest me," is a remark attributed to an Anglo-Catholic clergyman.

[2] *François de Fénelon*, by Viscount St. Cyres, p. 119.

" the fellow is so puffed up that he believes himself to be neither in heaven nor on earth, but to have entered within the Divine Pleroma, and to have embraced his guardian angel. On the strength of which he struts about as proud as a cock." [1] And many of the later mystics plumed themselves no less on the strength of their spiritual conquests. The sameness of their experiences, and of the records they have left for our edification or amusement, cannot but strike the most careless observer. There is the same dreary round of celestial billing and cooing, inexpressible raptures, ineffably sweet caresses, " abysses of delectation and illumination "—all described in language that is equally trite, cheap, suburban. The writing is purely imitatory, the writers seem to be repeating a catechism of amatory mystical experiences with a monotony that is almost unbearable. It was said of Shelley that he was a spirit whose speech was music, and whose dreams were of love. The mystics' dreams are of love, but their speech, as a rule, is most unmusical: listening to it is like hearing great music badly played on a penny whistle.

In Catholicism we note an almost unique combination of sensualism and spiritual torment. On one side it is oppressed by an overwhelming sense of sin, giving rise to nightmares of grotesque and repulsive horror; on another it revels in vision of a rather cloying sweetness. Wistful Madonnas, their comely heads bowed in a pensive melancholy, combine with charming female saints,

> Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,

to make a very attractive picture; and all are supposed to be watching over us poor struggling mortals. The emotional complement, which is said to be lacking in philosophy and Protestantism, is supplied in more than ample measure. The Anglo-Catholic Queen of Heaven, as we have seen, " treads through " the streets of the celestial City, with roses in her bosom and stars upon her head. To Roman Catholics the Madonna is " Dearest Mamma," [2] or, if St. François de Sales'

[1] Irenæus, quoted in Inge's *Christian Mysticism*, p. 82.
[2] See Fawkes' *Studies in Modernism*, p. 32.

view of the matter be correct, dearest grandmamma.[1] Fascinating vestals, "incomparable virgins," who fancy they are the centre of Heaven's interest and pique themselves on the attraction they exercise over their celestial Lovers, tell us of intimacies which smack of the human rather than the divine. To Blessed Angela of Foligno the Virgin Mary confided the secret that her Son was scrupulously clean, and always had His hair nicely brushed.[2] Blessed Angela also narrates how, as she journeyed to Assisi, the Saviour addressed her in the most complimentary terms, calling her his love, his sweet, his joy. Other saintly persons call the Second Person of the Trinity "my sure sweetness! my soul-heal, my darling, my light, my balm, my honey-drop!" and beg that they may be His "leman."[3] Blessed Angela is more concerned with her own fascinations, and tells us how charmed the Holy Ghost was with her. "Very often did He say unto me, 'Bride and daughter, sweet art thou unto me; I love thee better than any other who is in the valley of Spoleto.'" Miss Evelyn Underhill, however, a recognized authority on mysticism, diagnoses this as "a subtle form of self-assertion" on the part of Angela.[4] In some cases the attraction of these pious ladies is so great as to induce Heaven to alter the course of Nature in order to gratify their whims. Teresa, the Little Flower of Lisieux, who died in 1917, prayed for, and was granted, a snowstorm on the morning she entered her convent.[5]

The refined and gentle Fénelon said that what the contemplative desires is "une simple présence de Dieu purement amoureuse"; he speaks to Christ always "comme l'épouse a l'Epoux. St. Catherine of Siena, in her famous *Dialogo*,

[1] "Honorez, révérez, et respectez d'un amour special la sacrée et glorieuse Vierge Marie. Elle est mère de notre souverain père, et par conséquent notre grand'mere" (Inge's *Christian Mysticism*, p. 231).

[2] *Nec perplexitas in capillis ejus aliqua apparuit* (Vaughan's *Hours with the Mystics*, i. 362).

[3] From a collection of homilies quoted in Cohen's *Religion and Sex*, p. 135. Manuals of devotion describe the perfection of the divine hair, ears, chin, eyelashes, face, and hands of "excessive and indescribable beauty."

[4] The *Spectator*, August 5, 1923.

[5] "What a delicate attention on the part of Jesus!" she exclaimed (see the *Tablet* and the *Universe*, May 5, 1923).

frequently alludes to Jesus as "the sweet and amorous Word." The *plaie amoureuse* in the Saviour's heart figures in many pious works, and, if the doctors are to be believed, a *post mortem* examination revealed a physical "amorous wound" in the heart of St. Teresa. She herself describes at length, and with much repetition, the "sweet agony" of celestial embraces, and the ravishing enchantments of Divine love. St. Catherine of Genoa had to throw herself on the ground to cool herself, crying out, "Love, love, I can bear it no longer." She also "confessed to a peculiar longing towards her confessor." [1] St. Gertrude informs us how God, in answer to her invitation, spoke to her "with bland serenity," and, affectionately bending down to her and clasping her to Him, imprinted a kiss of exceeding sweetness (*osculum prædulce*) on her soul.

Nor, as we gather from the works of Rome's most illustrious Saints, do these caresses go entirely unreciprocated. St. Bernard, contradicting that article of the Church of England which declares that God has neither body, parts, nor passions, teaches that there are three ways of kissing Him—on the hands, on the feet, and on the lips or mouth.[2] In his Fourth Sermon on the Canticles the Saint expatiates at length on this topic, and describes how, and under what circumstances, each kiss is to be given. The kiss on His mouth or lips is reserved for those souls only who are absolutely perfect.

Father Tyrrell (*Autobiography*, ii. 486) has some very straight talk on the unwholesome sentimentality which sets a personal affection for God, and a mawkish love of the *flesh* of Christ, above natural virtue and the ethical principles for which He lived and died. In this way, Tyrrell says with much wisdom and absolute truth, prurience rather than virtue is created, often with disastrous results. Bossuet, on the other hand, favoured the grosser and more carnal view: sacred and profane love are almost indistinguishable in his writings. "D'imaginer un amour qui ne porte point de delectation"

[1] Cohen's *Religion and Sex*, p. 128, citing Kraft-Ebing.

[2] *Triplex est osculum. Primum est pedum, secundum est manuum, tertium vero oris* (Sermo xlvi, *De Amore Sanctiss: Magdalenæ*), and see Sermons on the Canticles, and *De Diversis*.

was, in his opinion, to imagine a love without love, to indulge in chimæras and illusions.[1] He was a firm believer in transports of religious passion, of "enivrantes douceurs," "dispositions de l'union et de jouissance," abysses of delectation, etc. How thoroughly he acted upon these orgiastic principles in his correspondence with his adoring female penitents, will be seen presently.

The loves of gods and mortals have always been a favourite theme for bards and dramatists of all times, but the older writers displayed, as a rule, more restraint and better taste than some of their successors. Greek mythology, for example, tells us gracefully, and in the form of a poetical romance, how Zeus wooed Danae in a golden shower: Liguori's coarse narrative of the flirtation (there is really no other word for it) between the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary prior to her conception is simply disgusting—a stain upon literature.[2] Superior to the obscene imbecilities of St. Alphonsus, or the grossness of Bossuet, is the touching and affectionate correspondence between St. François de Sales and Madame de Chantal. The wording of the Saint's letters is spiritual and wholly free from offence, but the tone is essentially lover-like. Naturally the poor lady fell violently in love with her captivating director. Her sad letter "On Desire, and the Suffering of Deprivation," and another in which she says that "There is something within me that has never been satisfied," show the condition of a heart which, as Michelet says, "was already lacerated with passion"; and she longed for death to terminate her sufferings.

The heart, the organ of affection, has long been the basis of Catholic devotion,[3] and the devout gallantry of the seventeenth century proved a rich source of power and profit to the Church. Love and mysticism were found to be a most seductive

[1] *Œuvres Complètes de Bossuet*, 1841, vol. xvii. 612.

[2] *The Glories of Mary*, 1868 edition, "heartily commended by Cardinal Manning." This extraordinary book has had an enormous number of readers and is now freely advertised for sale by the leading firm of Roman Catholic publishers.

[3] "We cannot invoke a saint outside the heart of Jesus," said the Ritualist Bishop of Zanzibar. "When we sing our hymns to Mary, we mean the Mary within the heart of God."

compound, an irresistible bait to attract converts and to fortify the attachment of the newly converted. The Jesuits, far from disapproving, were the chief propagators of the new sensuous devotion, and made it the means of restoring the sadly damaged prestige of their Order. Scarified by Pascal, their doctrines condemned by two Popes and the judgment of the civilized world, they had become the laughing-stock of intelligent society, when a new symbol that appealed much more than any theological system to feminine susceptibilities revived their popularity, and infused fresh life into the Society. Directors and confessors enlarged upon a new object of worship and displayed a new gory emblem, the bleeding heart of Jesus. Warm and impassioned women took the matter up seriously, and began to have visions inspired by directorial teaching. Conspicuous among these women was a peasant girl of Normandy, Mademoiselle Marie Alacoque. Marie, says Michelet in his *Priests, Women, and Families*, "was a strong girl of a sanguineous temperament, whom they were obliged to bleed constantly"; but the frequent bleeding did not prevent her imagination being filled by visions of blood. She was also subject from early life to "rheumatism, palsy, pains in her side, and ulceration of the legs";[1] and so vivid was her sense of modesty that the mere sight of a man offended her. She fasted and tortured herself in various ways, and the more her physical disorders increased the more numerous became her visions. Jesus appeared to her and showed her His heart bleeding and half-opened. He told her that "that day was the day of our spiritual wedding," and that "He wished to make her taste all the sweetness of the caresses of His love"; and "those divine caresses were from that day so excessive that they often put me out of myself." A little later He "spoke to her in passionate words, and opened her side and took out her heart, plunged it into His own, and then replaced it. He then explained to her His design of founding the Order of the Sacred Heart." Ever after, it is recorded, Marie had a pain

[1] St. Teresa, in like manner, had cramps, convulsions, vomitings, trances, catalepsies, fainting-fits, hysteria, and other nervous seizures, which she regarded as divine visitations. See *Hours with the Mystics*, ii. 154, 171.

in her side and a burning sensation in her chest—two plain symptoms of hysteria.[1]

Marie's intimate connexion with the divine Bridegroom was made, says Michelet, with the knowledge and under the direction of a skilful superior. The *nuptiæ spirituales* were duly celebrated, and a regular marriage contract was drawn up by the Mother Superior of the Visitandine convent. Marie Alacoque signed it with her own blood, while the Abbess signed for Jesus![2] The Mother Superior had Marie's confidence, and "directed her connexion with Jesus Christ." She also kept the King's Confessor, Père La Chaise—"that dull, lax, jealous, silly Religious," as Lord St. Cyres calls him—who held his royal master in a state of "shameful servitude," fully informed of what was going on. Marie also printed the name of Jesus on her breast with a hot iron; and it was stated that the Lover was not insensible to this. "Des lors, de mois en mois, l'épouse était visité de l'Epoux."

A great discussion followed whether homage ought to be paid to the symbolical heart and celestial love, or to the heart of flesh. Rome, while forbidding discussion of the matter, appears to have inclined to the allegorical view; but France, the home and birthplace of devout gallantry, showed a decided preference for the flesh itself. The Jesuits took care to get money out of both sides; their equivocation, as Michelet observes, was a source of wealth. Their predilection was, of course, for the material view. "C'est le culte du vrai cœur sanglant, de la chair, du sang de Jésus," they said: there must be real blood, and lots of it, or the worshippers would not have been happy. "Dead beat in the world of ideas," the Order resumed its warfare "in the field of intrigue, passion, and human weaknesses," where nobody could serve them so actively as women. The cult grew like wildfire, and was used with other things to kindle hatred against the Protestants and Jansenists. "Dieu se sert de tous les moyens," as the pious Madame de

[1] See L. Asseline's *Mary Alacoque, and the Worship of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*; Cohen's *Religion and Sex*; Michelet's *Priests, Women, and Families*, ch. xi.

[2] Michelet's *History of France*, vol. xiii, ch. xv.

Maintenon justly observed. "Un petit mal pour un grand bien," was the commentary of the casuists. In less than forty years 428 brotherhoods of the Sacred Heart were formed in France; a large and powerful cult of sensuous religiosity was firmly established, and still flourishes at the present day. The distinguished lady whose gory visions were the basis of it all received from the Church the high honours which she certainly deserved. Her beatification and subsequent canonization in 1920 may, I think, fairly be termed the apotheosis of eroto-religious hysteria.

It would, however, be a great mistake to suppose that these voluptuous outbursts proceed only from the undisciplined ranks of maudlin visionaries. They are to be found in the works of holy men like St. Bernard and St. François de Sales, of churchmen occupying high positions and possessed of the fullest culture. I will content myself with citing one conspicuous example, a man who certainly was no hysterical contemplative or mere courtly director of fine ladies, but an ecclesiastical statesman of the highest order. Bossuet—the "frank and manly Bossuet," the noble character and "fine genius, the best priest of his age," according to the anti-clerical Michelet; "by far the greatest Churchman modern Europe has produced," in Lord St. Cyres' opinion—Bossuet, despite his scorn of the "florid effeminacy, amorous gallantries, and pious excess" displayed in the mystical writings of St. Teresa and Fénelon, writes to his female penitents in a manner that is astoundingly imprudent, to say the least of it. If, says Michelet in his *Priests, Women, and Families* (p. 112), we want to know the real character of direction, the "meanness, jealousy, and vexatious tyranny" of directors "who interfere even in the slightest thoughts and affections," we must study the correspondence of "*the worthiest and most loyal of directors*"—the italics are not mine—Bossuet.

A few words by way of digression to explain who and what Bossuet was. To most Englishman he is little more than a name. Many have never heard of him at all: others have a vague idea of him as a great apostle of clerical absolutism who had a quarrel over trifles with Fénelon, and played an important

part in the ecclesiastical history of his time. As a matter of fact the autocracy he favoured was monarchical rather than Papal, and some of his works have been "indexed" by the Church on account of their Gallican tendencies; but he always had many staunch friends in the Curia. To say, as a recent author does, that he is the supreme representative of French literature in the seventeenth century—outdistancing even Pascal—and that he holds in France a position akin to that which Shakespeare occupies in England,[1] is a judgment to which I must respectfully, but emphatically demur. On the other hand, he was undoubtedly a very great man, and a righteous one with a very high standard of virtue, if his admirers are to be believed; and whatever niche we may assign to him in the temple of fame, all that he says must be treated with the respect due to so powerful and compelling an intellect.

Now, some of the directorial effusions, with their amatory tropes and images and ardours, which Bossuet addressed to his female friends, are sufficiently warm to satisfy the most fervent advocate of the religion of the heart; but they may not be equally to the taste of the "icy" Protestant. Dean Inge thinks that Bossuet's standpoint in the controversy about Disinterested Love is not religious at all, and that he expresses himself "somewhat coarsely." As to his letters in his capacity as director, my readers must form their own opinions. His ardent pictures of the loves of the celestial Bridegroom (l'Epoux) and His earthly brides must have been, and actually proved to be, highly disturbing to the "impassioned" nuns and other devotees who received them. Especially was this so in the case of that unfortunate widow, Sœur Cornuau, who did not try to conceal the sad condition of her heart, but freely confessed that she was "bursting with jealousy" because Bossuet wrote longer letters to Madame Albert, an inmate of the Abbaye de Jouarre,[2] than to her. Another lady recipient of his highly

[1] See *Jacques Bénigne Bossuet*, by Miss E. K. Sanders, p. 1.

[2] *Œuvres de Bossuet*, 1841, vol. xvii. 686. As there are no less than 164 of Bossuet's published letters to Sœur Cornuau, that "restless little egoist" (as Miss Sanders calls her) must have been rather hard to satisfy. Bossuet, however, had a feeling of "yearning sympathy" towards Mme. Albert, which apparently distressed the widow.

spiced favours grew rather frightened at their tone, and plaintively remarked that she could find nothing of this sort in St. Augustine! Bossuet's answer was that "les mystiques raffinent trop": they were "raffineurs qui n'entendent pas la force des termes dont ils se servent." He repelled, but in a "really weak manner," we learn from Michelet, the tender advances of a noble nun whose sensual confidences he had declined; but when she got alarmed at his sentiments and wanted to take a less beloved director, he forbade her to make the change. He had no idea of encouraging or permitting women's independence, but was a confirmed anti-feminist who refused to get entangled in petty jealousies "such as women are apt to indulge in." The only dowry, he said, which the bride brings the Bridegroom is her nonentity. Her duty is to humiliate herself to infinity, to strip herself of everything, to have "neither body, nor soul, nor will, nor thought." [1] I can only hope that our Anglo-Catholic directors will be less exacting in their demands upon the ladies, or some of them may have a bad time.

When the Bridegroom visits the bride she is bidden by this worthiest of directors not to hurry or show herself too forward, but to maintain the proper *expectans expectavi* attitude: "She must yield her heart. The means of the union is the union itself. All the correspondence of the bride consists in letting the Bridegroom act." [2] She ought neither to receive or give any limits to her transports. In other letters Bossuet grows more soulful and sentimental. "The Holy Bridegroom," he says, "is as good as He is beautiful" (xvii. 719, Letter cxxxiv). "He is a child, He is a grown man; He comprises in Himself all the beauty of all the ages. . . . You may kiss at liberty this dear little Brother" (ib. 713). In Letter xxxiii (xvii. 613) there is a very ardent passage on the nature of Divine Love, beginning—"When the tender wound of love once begins to make itself felt in the heart," etc., where he gives the susceptible widow a lesson in the coquetry of celestial courtship. "*Vous avez blessé mon cœur, ma Sœur, mon*

[1] *Œuvres de Bossuet*, 1841, xvii. 761.

[2] Ibid., xvi. 662 I.

Epouse ; encore un coup, vous avez blessé mon cœur par un seul cheveu qui flotte sur votre cou" (Canticles iv. 9). And the bride is instructed by her admirable director as to how she should behave under these difficult circumstances. "Soyez douce, simple, et sans retour, ma Fille, et allez toujours en avant vers le chaste Epoux : suivez-le, soit qu'il vienne, soit qu'il fuie ; car il ne fuit que pour être suivi" (xvii. 613).

Such was seventeenth-century direction at its best, if we may credit the admirers of Bossuet : the Church has created a celestial seraglio, as it were, which has already reached vast proportions, and is growing year by year. And far too much of this sort of thing, as some Catholics admit, is to be found in the devotional literature now in use. The writing may lack Bossuet's extreme coarseness—the passages I have cited are quite mild compared to some others in his correspondence [1]—but the sensuous element is dragged unnecessarily, though of set purpose, to the front. All this unsavoury twaddle simply exacerbates the ills it is presumably intended to remedy : the potion, as Michelet puts it, which is to cure natural passion by a stronger one, is marvellously calculated to double the evil. Nor can human automata, whom the director would move about like puppets on a string, ever be galvanized into genuine activity by a system which is but Quietism under another name. Mysticism is essentially passive (*passio*), as the *Tablet* told us the other day ; the contemplatives, and even practical men like Bossuet, may cry out against the dangers and evils of passivity,

[1] I dare not, in a book intended for public reading, set out at length the extraordinary effusions addressed by Bossuet to his adoring lady penitents. See, in particular, Letter XXXVI to Sister Cornuau (*Works*, vol. xvii, p. 616), which contains the passage, "Rejouissez-vous avec Jésus-Christ, de ce qu'il est le plus beau des enfants des hommes." The bride is represented as saying to the Bridegroom, "Fuyez, mon bien aimé ; fuyez, fuyez en un lieu ou je sois seul avec vous." In Letter CIV Bossuet says, "Osez tout avec le céleste Epoux ; vos libertés lui plaisent. . . . Saisissez-vous de lui dans votre retraite. . . . Reposez-vous doucement sur son sein . . . et montez avec lui sur ce doux appui. . . . Je vous permets les plus violents transports d'amour." "Jésus veut qu'on soit un avec lui ; il veut jouir, il veut qu'on jouisse de lui. Sa sainte chair est le milieu de cette union" (CCXLII, vol. xviii, p. 179). "C'est dans la sainte Eucharistie qu'on jouit virginalement du corps de l'Epoux, et qu'il s'approprie le notre" (CII, xvii. 682). Other letters contain expressions of a still more hazardous nature,

but they end by encouraging the inert and somnolent elements of our nature : " they all point out the abyss, and all fall into it themselves." Even the alert and energetic Pascal tells the unbeliever to act as if he believed : " Take holy water, attend Mass and the like," he says. " It will deaden your critical faculty, and stupefy (*abêtir*) you into belief."

No man ever lived who was fitted to perform the duties entrusted to the priests of dogmatic religions ; and nowadays we hear on all sides complaints about the difficulty of obtaining qualified men to fill the depleted ranks of the Roman Catholic and Ritualist clergy. But, unfortunately, intellectual or moral inferiority is not necessarily a bar to the successful assertion of clerical influence : the soul that wants to be ruled is not particular in its choice of a master. Surely it is imprudent to entrust such vast powers and responsibilities to a limited class of rather second-rate men ! The best citizens will not be those who have been trained in such a school ; and still more certain is it that right conduct and mental stability are hindered, rather than promoted, by a religion that makes of mysticism a sanctification of sensuality and seeks to counterbalance terror with erotic twaddle and the sickly ebullitions of a pietistic animality.

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CHAPTER XVIII

QUIETISM

Quietism is the theory that divine illumination and perfection may be achieved by maintaining a purely passive and receptive attitude to celestial revelation, and that true knowledge is only obtainable through the medium of a divine stupor or species of "beatific vacuum." Bodily and mental inertia is the royal road to intellectual discernment, no less than to spiritual perfection. In one of its aspects Quietism may be regarded as a protest or reaction against frigid legalism, like that of Islam, or the tyranny of bureaucratic clericalism which would stamp out freedom and individuality in religious observance. The Roman Church only fitted man for the lower seats in Heaven; Quietistic contemplation would raise him to the topmost pinnacles. Its origin, like that of most mystical notions, must be sought in the East, particularly India. Stupefying drugs and other artificial methods, such as the maltreatment of the body, were freely used to induce the required state of insensibility. The oriental monk or Yogi, whose business was the restraining of his bodily passions, sat motionless for hours with his gaze fixed on his navel or the tip of his nose; and this, for some incomprehensible reason, was supposed to lead him to the vision of rapture. In the later stage the eyes were closed, and the body was tightly bandaged to cramp respiration: the soul was thus enabled to escape, and, for a season, the incorporeal part effected a reunion with the Supreme. The man who in the body had thus obtained liberation attended to no duties, performed no works of merit, and remained at a distance from all secular concerns. The restraints of morality did not concern him: he beheld Deity, heard celestial sounds and

voices, and, "glorious as the autumnal sky," lived a life of perfect apathy and magnificent uselessness.[1]

The same ideas appear among the Mohammedan Sufis. Some of them were literary Quietists who expressed themselves in poetical imagery of a highly sensuous nature, but others were ascetics who would close the eye of sense to every external impression, and purify the soul by removing from it everything earthly and human. They toiled, watched, fasted, and otherwise disciplined themselves in order to escape from human limitations and become divine. These notions have, in greater or less degree, permeated mysticism throughout the ages; and, as we have seen, are at work in the ranks of mystical-dogmatic religion to-day. The ascetic idea, the analogue of mediæval mysticism, may change its ideals and methods here and there, but it remains the same as ever in principle: the Guru, that "Godful man" and most imperious of taskmasters, the agent and representative of celestial authority, reappears as confessor or director. The Roman Catholic or Anglo-Catholic does not (so far as I am aware) pass long hours in beatific absorption, but both have a firm belief in the spiritual efficacy of hair shirts, spiky *ceintures*, and steel cat-o'-nine-tails. A "strident note of pessimism" concerning this world and all that it has to offer, a despair of earthly life which is "the counterfoil of our hope in another," are the foundation of this type of religious character. "It was no Buddhist, but the profoundly Christian Michael Angelo, who wrote:

> Fain would I sleep; fainer be dead as stone,
> While Wrong and Shame on every side abound;
> Stark, sightless, senseless! God, what a boon!
> Then wake, oh wake me not. Hush! Not a sound!

And the same note is struck by every great Catholic saint or hero whose pessimism, like that of the stern sculptor, reveals itself, not so much in contemptuous aversion from the world, as in a vigorous losing fight against the overwhelming forces of evil."[2]

[1] *Hours with the Mystics*, i, ch. 2.
[2] Tyrrell's *Christianity at the Cross-Roads*, p. 165.

The torpor of the Egyptian crocodile touched by the holy bird's wing is no longer the acknowledged ideal, but the deliberate chloroforming of human minds and wills is still pursued, as a means acceptable to God, of attaining union with the Divine. Quietism, in the opinion of a high authority on mysticism, "is the true conclusion of the mystic's premises"; and I, for one, shall not quarrel with the assertion. The higher mysticism, as preached by its greatest exponents everywhere, demanded a faculty above reason, the suppression of the individual, and the annihilation of self. Individuality is a crime in their eyes, "a robbery of God." Life itself is a disease, whose only cure is death. That "cruel beast, the self-conscious will," must be utterly destroyed, the intellect put out of action to make room for the spirit: a normal person cannot have visions.

> Leave nothing of myself in me:
> Let me so read my life, that I
> Unto all life of mine may die.

So sings the poet Crashaw; and this, as Dean Inge rightly says, "represents the aspiration of Catholic mysticism generally": officially the Church bans the Quietist doctrine; in practice she freely employs it as the most effective weapon in her campaign of subjugation. "Oh, dear child—sink thou only into thy Nothingness, and the better part is thine!" is Tauler's pious adjuration. Self-respect, according to Fénelon—who excommunicated courage as a remnant of the natural man—is an intolerable evil, "far worse than long silly vanity"; and his great nineteenth-century analogue Newman echoed the opinion.[1] "Grace must put out our natural life"—every spark of it, as an extinguisher puts out the guttering spark of a tallow candle. Detachment from the world, and a state of "holy indifference" to our fate in this world and the next, are the ideal: all friendship, generosity, and natural affection, extremists said, is only self-love of a more subtle and delusive quality. The Interior Life must be no battle-field where human welfare and progress are the prizes to be fought

[1] *François de Fénelon*, pp. 46, 103; Newman's *Idea of a University*, p. 208.

for, but " the purgatory of a dark and languishing will " ; the soul is at its best " when stretched, naked and thirsting, on the Cross, after all emotional solace is withdrawn." [1] Good deeds are of questionable value, because they may prove a pasture-ground of vanity and self-love, a teeming source of spiritual pride. After eight years of Fénelon's daily direction one of his penitents, Mme. de Montbéron, was afraid to nurse her daughter through a confinement, because she thought she might be obeying a merely natural, and therefore selfish, impulse ! Fénelon's direction " had spell-bound her judgment and eaten away her will till she could exist no longer for an hour without him." [2]

" An exceptional case," the reader may say. Perhaps : but it may serve to point a moral nevertheless. The history of Mme. de Montbéron's conscience, says Lord St. Cyres, with " its frantic yearnings after the Director and no less frantic repugnances, is the history of the penalty paid by all those who yield up to another the key of their heart, and listen to the precepts of a man as always and necessarily the oracles of God." We have plenty of other warrant in the writings of orthodox Catholics for Quietism of the most extreme kind : the theory runs through the body of mystical teaching, and still colours much latter-day religion. That most esteemed Doctor of the Church, St. Bernard, supplies us with plenty of examples. " To be emptied of thyself and almost annihilated," he says in his treatise on loving God, " is to become God " : and to paralyse the mental faculties, to reduce personality to zero, is to make the task of the human guide an easy one. Better to gaze and dream and blow spiritual soap-bubbles, than to inquire and learn. Such teaching has always been found appropriate nourishment for that portion of Christ's flock whom Pater calls " God's silly sheep." They find it so much easier to let another man do their thinking for them, and save them from the consequences of their sins. They are kept white and

[1] *François de Fénelon*, pp 104–5. At the same time, Fénelon rightly despised the " rotter " who turns priest simply because he is a rotter and finds himself useless in the world outside. He found " no merit in the ill-grown weeds that worldliness flung over the churchyard wall."

[2] Ibid., p. 223.

"guarded from the steep," as one of their poets says; they must do as their shepherd bids them, and he must always be at hand, or some of the flock might go astray or fall and hurt themselves. No room here for the great adventures of the soul. It must not stretch its limbs or brace its faculties in climbing the beckoning heights: the wanderer from the fold must be brought back and "folded in for sleep," the sleep of Quietistic peace.

But all this is only one side of the picture. Under the sheepiness of the sheep, and the benignant aspect of the fostering shepherd, there is often latent—as I have more than once pointed out—a wolfish savagery that is not rendered any more pleasant by its airs of sanctification.

> They pray, they fight, they murder, and they weep—
> Wolves in ferocity, in manners sheep;
> Saints in design, in execution men;
> Peace in their looks, but vengeance on their pen.[1]

Bossuet's great adversary, to take one instance, is described by R. A. Vaughan as the "meek and dove-like Fénelon"; but the Quietist dove had an eagle's beak, together with claws that were cruelly sharp; and it could use both on occasion with terrible effect, as the poor Jansenists and Huguenots found to their cost. The doctrine of Mystical Love could not expel the tigerish instincts of the theologian, and it was this side of clerical Quietism that Port Royal saw—and felt. Jansenism had many great and noble virtues until it succumbed to "the gangrene of chicanery" which infected its Jesuit enemies, and Fénelon made full use of its weaknesses. "He was mixed up with absolutely abominable things," says that admirable scholar and critic, M. Emile Faguet; "he was preceded and followed by Dragoons . . . and steeped deep in the infamous work of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes." "The angel of peace, bringing with him the angel of extermination," saw things which make one "weep even when reading his own account of them."[2] Nor did he shrink from the baser arts

[1] Crabbe, *The Library*, quoted by the Rev. A. Fawkes.

[2] *The Real Fénelon*, by C. Poyntz Stewart. See also Lord St. Cyres' *Fénelon*, ch. xi.

of proselytism, says Lord St. Cyres—prying into letters, questioning servants (as the priests do nowadays), and espionage, and he aided the Jesuits in "crushing out Jansenist manly independence under the soft viscid pressure of a bureaucratic clericalism." Let me parenthetically remark that the pressure of Dragoons, and of the men with muskets and other instruments for converting the unorthodox, was neither soft nor viscid.

Nor must it be imagined that the secular arm was primarily responsible for the outrages of seventeenth-century fanaticism. "Not the arrogance of the King," says Miss Sanders, "or the intrigues of politicians or even the brutal instincts of the soldiery, could be held responsible for the miseries of the Huguenots; it was the clergy, represented by the bishops, who inspired persecution."[1] I should add, in justice to Bossuet, that he abhorred the whole thing, and the Jesuits hated him cordially in return; but Fénelon, "whilst speciously advocating conciliation, was privately urging stern measures of repression and punishment." Fénelon's tolerance is quite imaginary: with other good Romanists and Quietists, he was a believer in "a remedial harshness, a terrible kindness." There must be no "cowardly indulgences, or false compassion"; when the gangrene of disobedience creeps over the body of the community he thought (like Cardinal Vaughan, Mr. Belloc, and many others in our day) that the Church, "sword in hand," must nerve herself to sever the festering limb at one sharp blow.

St. Teresa, following the lead of St. Bernard and other Catholic notabilities, preached, but did not practise, Quietism in its extremer form; and John of the Cross, an apostle of negative, direction-ridden mysticism, advocated a piety which was an edifying display of self-immolating torpor, needless suffering, and self-depreciation. In St. Teresa's Prayer of Rapture "the bodily as well as mental powers are sunk in a divine stupor"; the hands are rigid, the whole body cold, and all human faculties rendered absolutely inoperative. She was duly canonized by a Church that, in later years, refused to

[1] *J. B. Bossuet*, p. 67.

recognize the offspring of which she was the real mother. In the following century the Spaniard Molinos became the chief purveyor of spiritual dope to Catholic devotees. He followed St. Teresa in her teaching, sometimes quoting her very words. He established himself in Rome and, "imbued with Italian languor," preached the new doctrine to willing auditors. "The torpid Romans, and these lazy fair ones," who passed their time lying on couches with half-closed eyes "among sumptuous *vines*, exotic flowers, lilies and roses"—to quote Michelet's rather highly coloured description—took very kindly to the gospel of inertia. The Pope, bishops, and cardinals praised and petted him so long as they found his dope a help in their warfare against the encroachment of Protestantism; but when it was seen that the mystic meant to supply his own opiates, thereby rendering the lucrative trade in absolution and indulgences unprofitable and the confessor unnecessary, the Jesuits clapped Molinos in prison for life and burned some of his disciples. Two years later his kindly tormentors brought him out of his dungeon and exhibited him to the mob howling for his blood, his hands bound, and a lighted taper between them. Then, gazing on the sea of infuriated faces, he returned to his prison, where he remained till death brought release.

A few words on the famous Quietist doctrine of Disinterested Love, which has long been the subject of acute controversy. Like most mystical theory, it is an ancient tale told a hundred times by Hindu and Sufi philosophers and contemplatives of every age, language, and clime. In the Laws of Manu more than three thousand years old, we are taught that self-respect and love for one's neighbour stand above all things. "He who fulfils all his obligations to please God only, and without thinking of future reward, is sure of immortal happiness. If a pious action proceeds from the hope of reward" (as so much pious action does nowadays) "in this world or the next, that action is described as interested. But that which has no other motive than the knowledge and love of God is said to be disinterested."[1] Others have denounced the mercenary

[1] *The Great Secret*, by M. Maeterlinck, p. 89.

religiosity which is orthodoxy's bane, and Emerson expresses the underlying idea in some beautiful lines :—

> Gifts of one who loved me,—
> 'Twas high time they came ;
> When he ceased to love me,
> Time they stopped for shame.

The Christian high-priest of Disinterested Love, as all the world knows, was Fénelon, its fervid prophetess Madame Guyon. The career of this remarkable woman has attracted an attention, and her teaching for a while exercised an influence, which would seem to be out of all proportion to her intrinsic worth and capacity. She combined ecstatic zeal and an attractive personality with wild notions borrowed from Molinos, and " carnal perversions of spirituality." Her theories about Graces *physically* bestowed on all and sundry, nauseating spiritual Plenitudes and Maternities and Fecundities, the flux and reflux (a sort of seventeenth-century ectoplasm, apparently) that went from her to her admirers and back again,[1] thence to lose itself in the Divine and Indivisible Unity, proved very disturbing to a considerable number of holy men. She also compared herself to the Woman of the Apocalypse, and claimed precedence over the Madonna. Small wonder that bishops grew frightened when she visited their dioceses : they esteemed and admired her more than they could say, but begged her politely, but firmly, to go away.[2] Her first spiritual cicerone was an attractive but silly director named Lacombe, a Barnabite monk of weak character and inferior intellect, to whom she had a violent mystical attraction which he amply reciprocated. He never left her side, and, says Michelet, " could not dine without her." She, on her part, said she was united to him by faith and the Cross. She experienced " towards him the same silence which she had experienced in regard to God " : they understood each other " in a manner ineffable and divine." [3] For five years she rambled about Savoy and France with, or at the

[1] *Hours with the Mystics*, ii. 217.
[2] *Fénelon*, by Lord St. Cyres, ch. vii.
[3] *Hours with the Mystics*, ii. 239.

heels of, Lacombe; devils were cast out—"exclaiming, as they went, that Madame Guyon was one of their deadliest enemies"—by the two thaumaturgists; conversions, miracles, and other spiritual blessings dogged their footsteps, until eventually they settled in Paris. Here Lacombe was arrested and imprisoned for life on a charge of heresy; while Madame made the acquaintance of Bossuet, and also—most unfortunately for him—of Fénelon. "Before she ever set eyes on Fénelon, Christ had united her to him more closely than to any other human being: after a week's acquaintance, her soul was knit to his as the soul of David to the soul of Jonathan." [1]

Her exact relation to the great Quietist "is a secret that lies buried in their lost correspondence," says Lord St. Cyres, who apparently, like her ardent champion, Michelet, acquits the fascinating mystic of impropriety.[2] It is true that the wretched Lacombe afterwards confessed in prison to immoral relations with her, but the confession is supposed to have been extorted from him by the gentle methods familiar to the Church.

However this may be, certain it is that Madame Guyon was Fénelon's evil genius, and the cause of those dire misfortunes which subsequently overtook him. Had it not been for her and Disinterested Love, he might well, as some wit has shrewdly remarked, have almost become a Saint. The new Madame de Chantal "required a St. François de Sales; she found one in Fénelon," and their friendship ripened into a disastrous intimacy. It was he who placed her on a pedestal she was unfitted to occupy, and, in Michelet's words, "gave a relish to her doctrines." He affected to condemn the absolute Quietists, but "nevertheless, with all his skill, cunning, and prevarication," he followed their fundamental doctrines: "his modification of Molinos in theory is less important than it seems to be." [3]

[1] *Fénelon*, p. 127.

[2] Michelet asserts that Madame Guyon was "pure in imagination," but I do not know on what grounds he bases his opinion. Viscount St. Cyres' verdict is that hers was "the chastity that is not pure"—which reminds one of Paul Bourget's severe judgment on certain transatlantic ladies—"Elles ont la dépravation chaste."

[3] Michelet's *Priests, Women, and Families*, p. 103.

In the systems of both there is a multitude of rules and regulations for the creatures of the clergy, and to enforce these rules the director, a sort of supplementary soul for the soul, must be called in at every moment. And the practice of his illustrious adversary, Bossuet, differs but little from that of Fénelon. The two may fight like cat and dog about words and ideas, but both are occupied in lulling the penitent's will to sleep, and making the human intermediary indispensable. The effect on personality of such a system is always the same, whoever the agent may be; resolution and individuality are crippled. "The reliance on authority," says Emerson, "measures the decline of religion, the withdrawal of the soul." You are scattering your force, losing your time, blurring the impression of your character. Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. "Do your own work, and I shall know you, and you shall reinforce yourself. A man must consider what a blind-man's buff is this game of conformity."

CHAPTER XIX

A SORDID INTERLUDE

The history of the Latin Church is a strange medley of tragedy and farce, now one, now the other predominating. Both elements are to be found in the painful story which I am now about to relate. Every man and woman that is born alive is supposed to be a partisan of Plato or of Aristotle, and few writers on the Quietist controversy have succeeded in holding the scales of justice even between Bossuet and Fénelon. To some people their tragic quarrel may appear as merely a sordid interlude in the history of religious dogma linked in incongruous union with mysticism; but it also throws a lurid light on priestly bigotry and implacability, and on the seamy side of clericalism in general, and the lessons it conveys cannot safely be disregarded. Charity, we are told, is the first of mystical virtues, and we shall see how a great mystical prelate, and a still greater churchman who was an expounder of mystical doctrine, loved one another. The warfare between the two furnishes another example of how the noble may blend with the mean, the great with the infinitely little: it was a battle of giants fought out to the bitter end with the weapons of pigmies. Malice showed herself at her worst, and Disinterested Love issued in hymns of reciprocated clerical hate. Neither of the two doughty champions thought for a moment of turning his cheek to the smiter, but hit back promptly for all he was worth, and without scruple as to the means he employed.

After Madame Guyon's arrival in Paris she resumed her prophetic mission, and for a while all went well. She became the centre of a small but illustrious coterie. Dukes and duchesses were fascinated by the indescribable charm of her

manner, and listened with delight to the tender and rapturous outpourings of her spirit. "Fashion and devotion met," says Vaughan; "piety and politeness embraced each other." But presently there was a change. Letters filled with complaints against Lacombe and Madame Guyon poured in upon Harlai, Archbishop of Paris, an unmitigated scamp, "as profligate an ecclesiastic as that licentious age produced," as Miss Sanders calls him in her work on Bossuet. He owed his archbishopric, says Vaughan, to his libertinism in the days of Madame de Montespan; and he was now atoning for the scandals of his life and diocese by exemplary rigour in matters of doctrine. "Seventy-two witnesses were needed by the Roman Courts to establish a charge of sexual vice against an Archbishop" [1] or bishop; and the required number of deponents does not appear to have been forthcoming. In any case the rake's progress of the giddy prelate was allowed to continue unchecked: a prudent Mother Church always takes precautions against the washing in public of soiled clerical linen. The pious and orthodox Harlai caused Lacombe to be put in prison, where he spent the remainder of his days. "A little calumny and a forged letter obtained from the king a *lettre de cachet* confining Madame Guyon to an apartment in the Convent of Ste. Marie." [2] Her most dangerous enemy was her own half-brother, Père La Mothe, who wished to oust Lacombe and to become her director. He employed a woman to forge letters damaging her character, falsely asserting that after living many years with her as maid, she had been forced to leave in disgust at Madame Guyon's abominable life.

After a captivity of eight months Madame Guyon obtained her release owing to the friendly intervention of Madame de Maintenon, and once more she became the darling of the *salons*. Her disciples daily increased in number. "Mystical terminology became the fashionable language" of wits and *roués* and beautiful young ladies. Smart Ariels of the drawing-

[1] *F. de Fénelon*, p. 163. Pope Nicholas I (who described the general Synod of Metz as "a brothel") relies on this remarkable ordinance and gives Pope Silvester as his authority; but Mr. McCabe (*Crises in the History of the Papacy*, p. 119) seems to doubt its genuineness.

[2] *Hours with the Mystics*, ii. 247.

rooms chattered about the refining influence of the mystical state and the delights of rapturous contemplation. They affected to be weary of the world, "coquetted while they talked significantly of holy indifference or pure love." All saw in the fascinating prophetess the ideal of devotion, studied her books, and listened to her as an oracle. The fervour of her religious conversation and the sweetness of her utterances were an agreeable contrast to the dryness and rigidity of clerical formalism: Disinterested Love, the Spiritual Plenitudes, Maternities, Fecundities, and the rest of it, became the vogue.

It was during this period that Madame Guyon became acquainted with Fénelon. At first he distrusted her, but her innate charm, her eloquence and ecstatic zeal, the persuasive accents reinforced with a peculiar mystic "inwardness," gradually overcame the prejudice. Bossuet, on the other hand, began by approving and admiring her, but ended with calumny and persecution. Her acquaintance with Fénelon gradually ripened into the intimacy which was to be the cause of so many disasters. The extent of her hold on his heart and affections will always remain a subject of controversy. He averred that she exercised upon him "no special attraction, either natural or supernatural"; but there was a strong community of sentiment. "They met, they pleased each other, and their sublimity amalgamated";[1] the new Chantal had found her St. François de Sales, and the dangers and inconveniences of these spiritual unions between persons of opposite sexes were once more demonstrated.

Ugly reports about Madame Guyon got abroad, and Fénelon put an end to the correspondence, promising his family to break off with the lady and to "observe the silence of a profound repose." Owing to the favour of Madame de Maintenon, Madame Guyon had become in effect the spiritual instructress of the former's college at St. Cyr, where the two principal directors were Godet des Marais, Bishop of Chartres, and Fénelon. Godet, "disgusting in person, a sour ascetic and spiritual martinet," was miserably jealous of the rival confessor

[1] *Fénelon*, p. 127.

whose charms captivated the female inmates of the college. He plotted against Fénelon and Madame Guyon, using the familiar instrument of malicious calumny. The dangerous character, "the sweet poison," of Madame Guyon's doctrine were denounced, and their author requested to keep away from St. Cyr. The prudence and orthodoxy of Fénelon were seriously doubted, and a commission was appointed to examine the life and doctrine of the prophetess. She was canonically answerable only to Harlai, Archbishop of Paris, but that episcopal rake was not considered a fit person to decide upon Disinterested Love or the Love of God: he was thought to be a much better judge of other kinds of love. Accordingly the scope of the inquiry was enlarged, and the commission entered into a general investigation of the new spirituality with which Fénelon, influenced by Madame Guyon, had identified himself. He well knew that his future, and that of his doctrine, were at stake, and he was not going to allow any feelings of sympathy or knightly devotion to an innocent prophetess to divert him from the course he had determined to pursue: he would have let the poor lady "die in prison if only the doctrine of the Saints was secure." [1]

The examination dragged wearily on; the dispute, as often happens in theological controversy, was mainly over words, and a vast amount of twaddle was talked about Disinterested Love, the Interior Life, the Passive Prayer, and various recondite theories and "errors" of the Quietists. In the end articles were drawn up, condemning certain Quietist doctrines, which Fénelon grudgingly signed; and peace seemed to be restored. In 1695, while the commission was still at work, Madame de Maintenon induced Louis XIV to make her beloved Director Archbishop of Cambrai, and shortly afterwards Fénelon took formal possession of the diocese. But a rift in his relations with Bossuet had already begun to show itself; he well knew how much depended on the findings of the Commission, and that his own future and that of his beloved doctrine were in jeopardy. "Monsieur de Meaux" (Bossuet) was hard at work on a treatise which would utterly confound

[1] *Fénelon*, p. 130.

the Quietists, and " Monsieur de Cambrai " grew alarmed. He had promised to read Bossuet's treatise, but said that he would refuse to approve it if it attacked Madame Guyon's writings or her character. The treatise (*Instruction of the States of Prayer*) duly appeared, containing a tremendous attack on Quietist doctrine and very severe reflections on Madame Guyon. It did not mention her by name, but was evidently designed to hold her up to odium and ridicule. Its author sent the book to Fénelon, requesting him to endorse its contents, and the newly-made Archbishop saw that he had been manœuvred by his powerful and unscrupulous opponent into a very unpleasant dilemma. To approve the treatise would be a cowardly condemnation of Madame Guyon, and also of himself and their mutual doctrines: Lord St. Cyres thinks that he was prepared to abandon his friend, but it may well be that a sense of chivalry forbade this course. On the other hand, to defend her personal cause and her extravagant theories was a dangerous alternative, and one that would bring hostile orthodoxy upon his back. Finally, after much manœuvring and counter-manœuvring on both sides, Fénelon was forced to speak, which was exactly what his enemies wanted; and in February 1697 he published his famous work, *The Maxims of the Saints*, and the two mighty rivals began their deplorable quarrel.

This remarkable book did not vindicate the hardly-used Madame Guyon; it dealt with abstract problems, and expounded from the author's standpoint the teaching of the Church on the doctrines of Disinterested Love of God, Passive Contemplation, mystical union and perfection. Self-interest, says Fénelon, being the root of all evil, must be excluded from our love of God; and he deals at length with the nature and qualities of this love. Pure contemplation is negative—as the older mystics taught—and the only true " quietude " is the peace of the Holy Ghost. Briefly, the treatise was an attempt to justify, according to the principles laid down by the most illustrious mystics and Catholic theologians, the moderate Quietist doctrine held by the author and, in substance, by Madame Guyon. It gained the approval of certain divines;

but was nevertheless, as Lord St. Cyres observes, doomed from the first moment of its appearance. Learned bishops thought that grave errors lay concealed under the specious Maxims, which were by no means to the glory of God. Nearly all Fénelon's friends forsook him, feeling that his was a losing cause: the exceptions were certain faithful allies, like the Duke and Duchess of Beauvilliers, and some aristocratic enemies of the middle-class Bossuet. The Jesuits, who worked with Fénelon against the Protestant and Jansenist heretics, were secretly on his side. They hated Bossuet, who returned the compliment with interest. His franker and more open nature revolted at their devious morals, their underhand tricks, and the gospel of trickery, shuffling, and prevarication which they preached and practised. He had no taste for what he very properly styled "les ordures des casuistes": they probably stank in his nostrils, as they do in the noses of every decent person in our day. As Michelet says, casuistry dealt with "a wandering mass of iniquity which would have been abhorred by ancient Sodom"; and let me parenthetically observe that the young people of our day do not want to be enlightened on such matters.

The life and soul of the opposition to Fénelon was Bossuet, who, in his capacity of *malleus hæreticorum*, professed to be vastly shocked by the terrible Quietist doctrine; and scarcely less implacable was King Louis himself. Even the hitherto faithful Madame de Maintenon, who (like the Jesuits) "looked out on the world through a keyhole," broke with her adored Director; and the place-hunters and hangers-on of Versailles followed in her wake. The virtuous Grand Monarque, Louis XIV, expressed his royal abhorrence of Fénelon's impious doctrine, and, acting under Bossuet's pressure, banished "Monsieur de Cambrai" from the Court, curtly telling him to go to his diocese and stay there. Fénelon bade the Court farewell in a dignified Letter of Remonstrance, which contains some very plain speaking about his adversaries, and a great literary warfare began. The "Three Prelates" who headed the opposition—Bossuet, de Noailles (now Archbishop of Paris), and the Bishop of Chartres—answered Fénelon by a Declaration

of his terrible errors, and the " Eagle of Meaux " sharpened his formidable talons and let fly with a succession of treatises denouncing his rival and Madame Guyon. After beginning by treating her kindly, he now bullied and threatened the unfortunate lady, and eventually procured her condemnation and imprisonment. She lingered, we are told, for four years a solitary prisoner in the dungeons of the Bastille, until she was liberated in 1702. In the same tower was confined another famous prisoner, the Man of the Iron Mask, who from his lonely cell beguiled with the melancholy notes of his guitar a captivity that had then lasted thirty-seven years.[1]

For eighteen months the war of pamphlets went on. Quietism, Fénelon's critics contended, inculcated a false spirituality, disowned the authority of Scripture, of tradition, of morality. It established an impious and brutal indifference between vice and virtue, between everlasting love of God and everlasting hate. Fénelon's Disinterestedness was but " Deism in theological dress," a vain and frivolous imagining that clung to nothing, hoped for nothing, and said no prayers ; a love that knew no gospel, no Saviour, no Christ. It inculcated a detestable doctrine of religious exclusiveness which gave no law that was true for the whole of mankind, and so endangered the unity of the Christian life. The Passivity of Fénelon was nothing more than a shameful inaction which forbade resistance to sin and temptation as an interruption to repose, and so undermined the foundations of moral responsibility. It was, according to Bossuet, as summarized by Lord St. Cyres, an indolent waiting on Grace, that " never stooped to co-operate wth God, but stood aside in craven trembling from the battle of life, under pretence of leaving all to Him." Charity might be the queen, but she was not the sum of all the virtues : it was man's duty to gird up his loins and fight the good fight for righteousness, rather than to extol an imaginary perfection which extinguished the nobler desires only to inflame the lower. Such teaching, said one of Fénelon's greatest friends, " surrenders all things to the dictates of the spirit, and

[1] See Vaughan's *Hours with the Mystics*, ii. 272.

refuses nothing to the desires of the flesh."[1] It also involves the destruction of true love, which requires two living factors for its continuance. To regard (as so many Catholics do still) earthly love as simply a training-ground for the next world, is only selfishness thinly disguised, and it paralyses morality by weakening man's sense of his duty to his neighbour.

Fénelon replied that his doctrines had been grossly travestied, and with some difficulty obtained the King's permission to appeal to Rome. Bossuet consented, but sent Pope Innocent XII, who lived in terror of Louis XIV, a letter which practically intimated the decision at which Infallibility was expected to arrive. The quarrel entered on a new phase, and grew daily more embittered. Charges were met by counter-charges; vague suggestions and innuendoes filled the air, and pamphlets rained in showers. Each side accused the other's champion of flirting with Madame Guyon. Even Cardinals had their jests about the pretty lady and Bossuet, who, determined to crush his antagonist at all costs, and by any methods, redoubled his accusations. His was "the bourgeois insolence of a prelate in the right against a gentleman in the wrong"; he made charges as base as they were reckless, and "hated as only a priest can hate." "God forbid," he said, when he was pressed, "that I should say a word against Monsieur de Cambrai's morals." Yet, says Lord St. Cyres, it was ingenious "to drag Madame Guyon from her prison to confrontations with Lacombe, to wring from this wretched man, now ripening fast for a lunatic asylum, confessions of guilty commerce with his friend, to remind the world that by her own avowal she had *another* spiritual son who stood even nearer to her than Lacombe. It was wise also to make much of the trial of the filthy Curé of Seurre, condemned at this very time to the stake for Quietism and spiritual incest, to hunt up the records of mystical scandals in Italy and Spain, to keep the Roman gossips agog for new

[1] *J. B. Bossuet*, by Miss Sanders, p. 305. To fight one's faults, Molinos thought, is but a poor thing, unworthy of the perfect Christian. As I have more than once shown, the evil latent under these mischievous extravagances has by no means disappeared from Latin orthodoxy in our time. It appears in the works of Gury, Liguori, and other moral theologians whose writings are still authoritative.

letters, new discoveries, new abominations, but especially for that imaginary correspondence between Madame Guyon and Fénelon which was so terrible that it could only be printed at the last extremity." [1]

Fénelon, on his side, never flagged in ardour or wit, and his genius astonished friends and enemies alike.[2] His personal charm shone through his writings and conversations and, as Bossuet found, bewitched people's imaginations. Nor was he any more scrupulous than his great rival. Both sides misused their authorities, garbled quotations, misrepresented their opponents in the usual fashion of theological disputants. Fénelon showed himself a master of quibbles and irrelevancies, "scheming, shuffling, downright lying, mystification for its own sake"; his pamphlets were "barbed with an irony benignly outrageous," [3] obscuring the clearest reasonings and the simplest issues. And yet, Lord St. Cyres says, fundamentally he was thoroughly sincere: "through all this coil of tangled falsehood ran a thread of higher feeling," and he had a genuine desire to give back peace to the Church.

All this time, as Miss Sanders shrewdly observes,[4] the differences between the two were really quite small, and only acute on certain points. At Rome the deliberations lasted for two years, and were only terminated by the boredom of everybody and by Infallibility's fear that its prolongations might damage Holy Mother Church. A Congregation of Cardinals held long and wearisome debates. Bossuet and the King were urging the Pope to condemn Fénelon; the Jesuits, burrowing like "black moles," were countermining on the other side, and against the interests of France. Couriers went to and fro between Paris and Rome. Each party had its

[1] Bossuet speaks of Fénelon's "attachement insensée pour une femme trompeuse et fanatique" (*Works*, xix, 494). "Voila sans doute une liaison bien étroite et bien connue (xv. 333) . . . il avoit avec elle des liaisons qu'on n'ignoroit pas" (335); but in a subsequent letter (xv. 378) he says that he only meant spiritual liaisons! Other people, including Fénelon, did not interpret the words in this metaphorical sense.

[2] *J. B. Bossuet*, by Miss Sanders, p. 298.

[3] *Fénelon*, p. 159.

[4] *J. B. Bossuet*, p. 293.

army of spies and confidential agents. "Bossuet had his sandalled detectives to pry into every letter that came or went from Cambrai"; Fénelon and his ally, Cardinal Bouillon, penetrated the secrets of the Brussels and the Embassy mail-bags. There was a grand hunt for scandals, mystical and unmystical, in which poor Madame Guyon's name of course frequently figures. Archbishop de Noailles, the Roman ladies were assured, "did not love the Madonna"; [1] other ecclesiastics, as we know—such as de Noailles' predecessor, Harlai—loved other ladies more than was good for them or their souls. Bossuet's principal agent was his nephew, Abbé Bossuet, a vulgar and unscrupulous *roué*, but an able man withal, who hid not a little practical wisdom "behind the exterior of a foppish clerical cad." [2] The Abbé, as Miss Sanders says, was in no small degree responsible for the cloud that afterwards settled on his uncle's reputation. Fénelon's agent, the worthy Abbé de Chanterac, a loyal single-minded gentleman, was no match for his brother Abbé, who bullied silly old Cardinals that were "timid as hares, never free from panic." But another of Fénelon's allies, Cardinal Bouillon, understood as well as Abbé Bossuet what were the right sort of arguments for the dunces of the Curia. He "almost told the Cardinals they were asses, and turned on the senile Pope with the fury of a wounded boar." Poor old Innocent XII himself, sleepy, stupid, ailing, and infirm, had only a vague idea as to what all the pother was about. He took not the slightest interest in Quietism or Disinterested Love, but was terribly afraid of Louis XIV. His opinion was that Fénelon, who had his chief sympathy, erred from loving God too much, Bossuet from loving his neighbour too little. The whole thing bored and annoyed him intensely; but, as Abbé Bossuet assured his dear uncle, His Holiness "had great confidence in the Holy Ghost." [3]

The issue of the struggle was never really in doubt, because of Rome's ignoble fear of Le Grand Monarque and his

[1] *Fénelon*, p. 165.

[2] *Fénelon*, p. 166; and see Miss Sanders' *J. B. Bossuet*, p. 299.

[3] "Le Pape n'entend rien à ces discussions. Il est vrai qu'en récompense il a une grande confiance au Saint Esprit" (Bossuet's *Works*, xix. 361).

"cowardly bully," the Bishop of Meaux.[1] The Pope and his Cardinals might sympathize with Fénelon and his woes, but they could not—as Bouillon expressed it in the choicest language of the Sacred College—send such prelates as Bossuet and de Noailles "flying from the Vatican à coup de pieds par le derrière."[2] So, at long last, the wretched controversy drew near to its inglorious end. "Alas!" said the Pope—heart-sick of the interminable squabble—"they forget that it is Faith who is in danger." Others thought that, though Fénelon might plead well the cause of God, Monsieur de Meaux pleaded still better the cause of religion. Accordingly the Curia endeavoured to arrive at a decision which, while soothing the implacable Frenchmen, should not ruin Fénelon, who, persuaded that Rome's conscience was in his favour, and that his Quietism found ample support in ecclesiastical tradition and Romanist principles generally, nevertheless went in no small terror of the Curia's cowardice. The Cardinals ended by deciding as little as possible. The *Maxims* was prohibited, but the book was not ordered to be burnt by the public executioner. Habitual Passivity, Indifference to Self and to Hope and Fear, and the deliberate sacrifice of all wish for Heaven, were all thrown to the wolves; and, saddest thing of all, it was laid down that Disinterested Love was not the sum and essence of the Gospel.[3]

The struggle continued fitfully at Rome for some time longer, each side vainly endeavouring to extract from the Pope some further pronouncement in its favour. After his condemnation Fénelon's Quietism, like the mysticism of most clerically minded men, subsided gradually into undiluted sacerdotalism. He, the supposed *esprit fort*, the imaginary champion of political and intellectual freedom, held forth more than ever on the necessity of absolute obedience and of the director's leading string, warning his penitents against the dangers of exercising their own thought and judgment.

[1] Bossuet's "sleek cant and tearful unction" greatly annoyed Fénelon, who requested his enemy not to weep over him so profusely while he tore him in pieces (Vaughan's *Hours with the Mystics*, ii. 271).

[2] *Fénelon*, p. 172.

[3] Ibid., p. 173.

"Casuistry, the creature of the confessional," as Vaughan says, "renders its parent a necessity": only the director could make the devotee's life tolerable. Fénelon persecuted the Jansenists, intrigued basely against the wretched de Noailles—and then denied to the latter's family that he had done anything of the sort—and ended by championing, to the huge delight of the Jesuits and Ultramontanes, the dogma of the Infallibility of the Roman See. His Treatise defending the dogma is still often quoted by Catholic extremists, and has proved a powerful evil, especially in France, up to the present day.[1]

So ended a miserable squabble, and one of the shadiest episodes in the chequered history of a questionable Church. It is the same old story of misapplied piety and learning wasted on subjects not worthy of it, of malice and spite—cruelty posing as divine authority chastening the error that is also a sin—of plot and counter-plot, and, above all, of inconceivable pettiness—churchianity at war with itself, tearing out its own vitals in futile rage at its own shortcomings, and forgetting that it was Faith herself that was receiving the deadliest blow. Such strange things are done by envenomed orthodoxy at grips with a decadent mysticism, which is itself in belated revolt against the tyranny of its oppressor. But let us not be too severe in our judgments upon the protagonists in this sordid quarrel; let us blame, not the men, but the system that made them what in their declining years they became. All Roman Catholics own a divided allegiance; let us remember, too, that many of them have a dual personality. Throughout this wretched story we seem to lose sight of the man as man, and to see only the priest as priest. Both Fénelon and Bossuet were true sons of their Church; and so, too, in their respective ways were the slippery Jesuits delving like moles underground, the secret agents and spies, the sandalled detectives who pryed into other people's letters, the hectoring Abbé Bossuet and the blustering Bouillon, and all the other characters in this futile and unsavoury drama. If two mighty prelates could stoop to such ignoble tactics, why

[1] *Fénelon*, ch. xi.

not the smaller ecclesiastical fry whose manifest littlenesses were unredeemed by any compensating merits ? As ordinary citizens they would probably have been ashamed to behave in this manner, but when the battle was for what they conceived to be the interests of their Catholic Mother, they found justification for all kinds of meanness and deemed everything permissible. Once more we are reminded of the average superiority of the secular conscience to the ecclesiastical : " the moral progress of men," as the Bishop of Durham expresses it, " outpaces the formal teaching of their Churches." Let us cease to think of Bossuet and Fénelon as ecclesiastical idols with feet of clay, but rather as men—great and noble men in many ways, each liberally endowed with virtue and genius—but tainted with the melancholy failings that mar their particular type. Their quarrel was but the natural fruit of an artificial theology that busies itself with words and phrases rather than with things, and camouflages an aggressive worldliness with a shallow pretence of overflowing spirituality. Not a few, says Lord St. Cyres, must have risen from a study of the controversy " to find a new zest in a saying of the great contemporary sceptic, Bayle, that God is too essentially good and reasonable to be the author of a thing so charged with odious sophistries as a positive religion." In a freer air, and under less cramping conditions, both Fénelon and Bossuet might have done better work for mankind, and for the Church each endeavoured so faithfully to serve. Peace to their ashes!

CHAPTER XX

RELIGION AND SOCIAL ORDER

That faith is a necessary principle of disruption, and dogmatic religion a perennial fount of discord, is a proposition which few will nowadays dispute, and when dogma is linked in an unnatural union with mysticism the confusion becomes worse confounded. If further confirmation of this be needed, the present state of the world, no less than the history of the past, amply supplies it. The battle of creeds still continues, and shows no sign of abating. Coming down awhile from the cloud-cuckooland of metaphysical abstractions to the lower ground of practical politics, we find bigotry still disturbing the world's peace, and in many cases arrayed against this country and the Empire. In America, Ireland, Australia, and other countries priests and bishops and laity of the Papacy have been working steadily for our destruction. In India pious visionaries of the mahatma type, like Gandhi, combine the forces of mystical religion with those of political discontent in order to inflame the people against our rule. They invoke Kali, the goddess "insatiable of blood," and patroness of political assassination. Gandhi himself, who unites in his own person the qualities of a vacillating mystic and political charlatan, is credited with a divine personality. Relying on this, and possessing a conscience of a peculiar kind, he incited the credulous Indian youth to revolt; but when the natural result followed in the shape of rapine and outrage of the most abominable kind, he merely cut down his self-imposed ration of milk by one half, and piously repented in sackcloth and ashes over calamities for which he was himself directly responsible. Another grave danger threatening the peace and prosperity of India is the never-ending sectarian feud between

Moslems and Hindus. In the neighbouring country of Tibet there are two Supreme Pontiffs, the Dalai Lama and the Tashi Lama, and both these holy men have been fighting one another vigorously. Travellers in China and Tibet are agreed that the Buddhist monks in those parts are extremely turbulent and bloodthirsty people, always spoiling for a fight; they also have an orthodox and mediæval belief in the efficacy of torture, which shows that even the gentlest of all types of mysticism does not necessarily make its mystics gentle. Elsewhere the Mohammedans of Asia, Europe, and Africa are united by a common bond of religious hatred against the infidels of the West; and this country has to bear the brunt of their enmity. While Wahabis, or fanatical Moslem Puritans, are turning out the clerical caste in Mecca, the ruling faction in Turkey is adopting Modernist ideas, but the religious question remains as acute as ever; the Government has greatly shocked orthodox feeling by suppressing clericalism, abolishing the Khalifate, and decreeing it that it is high treason to mix up religion and politics.

A few weeks ago the United States Consul at Teheran, while photographing a religious building, was attacked and beaten to death by the mob. In Palestine the political situation is sufficiently complicated, but the religious one is still more difficult. The British Governor of Jerusalem finds his post no sinecure. The Roman Church, while preaching a *jehad* against Zionism, is continually at loggerheads with its Protestant rivals; and there has recently been much squabbling, sometimes accompanied by rioting, between Roman Catholics, Anglo-Catholic pilgrims, Copts, and other sectarians at the sacred shrines and the Holy Sepulchre itself. A party of "schismatic Copts," 3,000 strong, made themselves particularly obnoxious during Holy Week. When some Roman Catholics used a right they possessed of passing before a Coptic altar the schismatic pilgrims "saw red"; there were "scandalous disturbances," the police were compelled to intervene forcibly and made several arrests.[1] In confirmation of this we learn from the *Church Times* that "Jealousy, intrigue, and sometimes deplorable brawlings are the common characteristics of Jerusalem's

[1] The *Tablet*, May 31, June 14, 1924.

religious life " ; and it is only the tact and watchfulness of the civil power that keeps the peace among the religious. This being so, it does seem a pity that Ritualist bishops and clergy from England should act like " schismatic Copts " by helping to create friction and scandal. Arriving in motor-cars, they appear to have arrayed themselves in " convocation robes " and other gorgeous sacerdotal vestments, and, bearing croziers, to have entered " pontifically " one of the most sacred edifices. According to the report in the *Tablet* the entrance was effected by somewhat devious methods, and in direct contravention of religious and international regulations. It is sad to contemplate these deplorable happenings on the holy hill of Zion. Meanwhile the expectant Moslem only awaits a favourable opportunity of slitting the throats of his Jewish and Christian neighbours. Let us hope that Blake's dream as expressed in his oft-quoted poem will not be realized, and that we may never build a Jerusalem of this kind " in England's green and pleasant land."

From some parts of Central Europe we have grave complaints about the oppression and bullying to which Roman Catholics are subjected at the hands of their new rulers, who belong to the Orthodox faith. Turning to the Antipodes, we find the sectarian dog-fight over the odious *Ne Temere* Decree and similar forms of Papist mischief-making still continuing in Australia, which has been systematically staffed by the Vatican with Anglophobe priests. Roman Catholics there are freely black-balled at club elections, and otherwise subjected to a social taboo which sometimes operates harshly.[1] When the debate on the anti-*Ne Temere* Bill in the New South Wales Parliament —which has made religious controversy more embittered than ever—was adjourned for the Christmas recess there was much uproar, and the Leader of the Opposition said that he would refuse to fraternize with members of the Government owing to its conduct.[2] In the United States the Government is

[1] Only the other day I asked a clever Australian lady whether this cheerful state of things still continued. " Oh yes," she replied : " if a man wants to put up for (say) a bicycle club, he has got to state his religion first ! "

[2] The *Sydney Morning Herald*, December 21, 1923.

discriminating against Romanists in its new Immigration Laws. Congregations are split, and households divided, by the violent quarrel between Fundamentalists and Modernists,[1] while the old feud between Papists and Protestants goes on as before. The recent Presidential election brought matters to a climax. We were told that "a new element of cleavage in American public life," "a terrific religious issue," had been brought into the politics of the United States. At the Democratic Convention "the religious factor was paramount," and became "the dominant issue": the Chairman of the Resolutions Committee solemnly warned the Convention that the Party's "life was threatened over this question of religious tolerance." The cause of the trouble was the nomination of Governor Smith, a New York Roman Catholic, as a Democratic candidate for the Presidency. He was a very popular man, and had "become a religious symbol" in the eyes of his Papist supporters; but the Protestants regarded his candidature as a challenge, which they were not slow to accept. The flames of sectarian bigotry were fanned to a white heat, and the old detestation of Rome and her ways revived. Pandemonium reigned for awhile at the Convention, and the police contingent was heavily reinforced in view of possible rioting and bloodshed. It was felt that deep moral and religious issues were involved, and the protracted struggle was only one more manifestation of that "notable anti-Roman Catholic sentiment" which, as *The Times* pointed out, now prevails in the United States.

"Never in my day," a valued correspondent writes from Canada, "was there such hatred towards Rome." Religious buildings were burned, and Roman Catholic churches (as the *Tablet* stated) had to be guarded at night by armed men with watch-dogs. In Oregon, Mexico, and various States of Central and South America the people are rebelling against the perpetual meddling, the exactions, and the tyranny of priests; many anti-Catholic measures have been passed into law. Going still farther west, we find that Church reunion is not exactly a success among the Christianized natives of the Tongan, or Friendly Islands, in the Pacific. An attempt to

[1] See the *Morning Post*, February 5, 1924.

amalgamate the Free and Wesleyan Churches in those parts caused something like civil war: the Wesleyans, armed with axes, attacked the Free Churchmen, broke a minister's jaw, and tried to throw him into the sea. "He is believed to be dying," the report stated; and a number of people were killed and wounded owing to this ill-advised attempt to establish Christian unity. In New Zealand "Rome" is detested.

In the domestic sphere the persistent interference of the Church in private life, her insolent overriding of national marriage laws and customs, have roused everywhere the most intense indignation. Ecclesiastics have promoted disloyalty to Great Britain, and encouraged sedition with incentives to outrage of the worst kind. In practice and in theory, as Lord Acton and other leading Catholics admit, the Papacy has for centuries justified assassination as a lawful, and even a virtuous, act when dealing with religious or political opponents.[1] Killing under these conditions is not murder, but an act acceptable to God and beneficial to the person killed. The Church has deliberately instilled into the minds of the faithful the idea of shedding blood as a holy sacrifice, the moral and "unique efficacy" of slaughter. Small wonder that Irishmen and others have made free use of the permission so liberally accorded them by their spiritual advisers. "Why are you doing this to us?" asked the poor farmer-folk at Altnaveigh in Ulster, as, in the early morning hours of June 17, 1922, they awaited the Papist assassins' bullets. "You are all Protestants, and that's enough," was the prompt reply; and the entire family was wiped out.

Five days later the world was horrified by the news that one of our greatest soldiers, Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, had been slain by two devout members of the Roman communion. Both of the men were Knights of the Blessed Sacrament, "daily and weekly communicants," we were proudly informed; and they justified their crime by an appeal to religion, convinced that "a higher Court—the only Court that matters—would judge them by their actions and have mercy upon them." On the morning of their execution a Papist crowd assembled outside the prison walls and paid

[1] See the *National Review* for August and October 1922.

homage on their knees to " these boys," who—as a gentleman " robed " (apparently with ecclesiastical sanction) " in surplice and cassock " informed them—" had fought for the faith." No official word condemning this demonstration has ever, so far as I am aware, been uttered by the Roman Catholic hierarchy.

In Spain such restricted measure of religious liberty as non-Catholics enjoy has been obtained in the teeth of strong clerical opposition. In this respect Protestants owe a debt of gratitude to King Alfonso, who has always shown himself on the side of religious toleration, although His Catholic Majesty's devotion to the Faith remains unabated. Addressing the Pope not long ago in his official capacity he promised that, if ever His Holiness " should have to raise a crusade against the enemies of our holy religion," Spaniards would willingly put the armed might of their country at the service of their Church, as their forefathers did " against the followers of Luther." [1] In France cleric and anti-cleric are again by the ears, and seem likely to remain so.

For this detestable state of affairs all over the world dogmatic and organized religion must bear the larger share of blame ; and the mystical element, as we have seen, has not so far proved itself an agent of humanization. Each sectarian coterie has its own cast-iron code of beliefs to which all must conform under pain of damnation or earthly persecution, its own set of sacred books which (though they usually contradict those of other faiths) contain the whole truth, the sole truth, and nothing but the truth : no others are genuine. Each regards the chastisement of " error " as a duty, the toleration of it as a crime. Rivalry, ambition, and exclusiveness are signs of healthy vigour ; patched-up unions can never endure, efforts at agreement are mere premonitory symptoms of weakness and decay. We were once taught to hail Christ (anyhow at Christmas) as the Prince of Peace ; but that would seem to have been all a mistake. The grey-whiskered argument—that Jesus came to bring, not peace, but " a sword " into the world—has been impressed on me, not once, but many times during the last

[1] Address to the Pope in Rome, November 1923 : see the *Tablet* for December 1, 1923.

five years ; and the inference would seem to be that, the more trouble we make, the better Christians we are. The question then arises, whether a religion conducted on these principles is really conducive in the long run to the welfare of mankind.

" Say not that evil is not permitted, whilst thou thyself art stirring up strife," said an ancient pundit of the Eastern world ; and it is strange how slow we moderns are to recognize the foolishness of our religious bickerings. We all profess a longing for peace, and some people who are really sowers of disunion spend their time fruitlessly ingeminating it. Remember that, as the Archbishop of York wisely observed in his diocesan letter of Christmas, 1922, " *Peace does not come* " (my italics). " It must be won by a spirit and a will " ; to win it we must enlist in the ranks of those who wage unceasing warfare against the enemies of peace, bearing in mind that the peace which is purchased by giving way to wrong-doing, or by what Mr. William Archer calls " a pusillanimous acquiescence in muddlement," is not worth having. Of these enemies the sacerdotalism that prides itself on its exclusiveness, and on the sorrow and trouble of which it is the occasion, is assuredly not the least ; and it is no Rationalist, but the Dean of St. Paul's, who tells us that " the worst enemies of Christianity are Christians." " Lovers of peace," he also says, " have not much to hope for from organized religion " ; [1] and there seems no reason whatever to doubt the correctness of Tyrrell's dictum that dissension will ever be the law of the religious world. I must further confess my entire inability to see how the cause of pacification will be helped by Englishmen following the advice of Anglo-Catholics, and making common cause with the principal mischief-maker and strife-bringer among the nations. The " hyænas " of the Catholic Press in Italy, France, and America show pretty clearly the real feelings of their Church towards England.

One of the most serious features of Papist mischief-making in our day is the malign and persistent attempt that is now being made to poison the wells of international friendship between Great Britain and the United States. I have already dealt

[1] *Outspoken Essays*, p. 253.

with this matter elsewhere and at some length, but the principles involved are of such vital importance to this country and the world at large that I make no apology for referring to it again. I have shown how enlightened Roman Catholics in this country, no less than Protestants, know well what is going on, and how they dread the possible consequences. Mr. Shane Leslie, for one, is perfectly well aware that the antagonism shown by American Romanists to England is not merely political —as many of his fellow-Catholics still maintain—but religious as well. He has warned us that the men most opposed to an Anglo-American entente " are, firstly, the Irish ; and, secondly, the Catholics " ; and, further, that English Roman Catholics may " have the unhappiness of seeing their fellow Catholics in America carrying out a successful and bitter warfare against our country, which generations will not alleviate." This warning was given five years ago, and subsequent events have proved how greatly it was needed : what a Roman Catholic M.P. described in the House of Commons as " a raging propaganda " against this country has been going on for years in the United States, and one of the principal offenders, as he said, is the Church to which he belongs. The large majority of American Romanists have no special political grievance against this country, and it is idle to contend that their hostility to England is untinged by sectarian motives.

The reasons of this religious hostility are not far to seek. The Great Divider is only pursuing her traditional policy towards us. There is an age-long feud between England and Rome, which, so far as we can see at present, can only be ended by the victory of one or other of the combatants. The Church rightly regards us as her worst enemy [1] in so far as we act as the most efficient bulwark against the spread of her principles and the growth of her power. If only she could " subdue our proud and imperial race " (to borrow Manning's much-quoted phrase) the rest, many Catholics think, would be easy. Dr. Leighton Parks, leader of the Modernist Party in America and one of the finest preachers in New York, told

[1] " As true followers of our faith we must pray earnestly for the downfall of England and the British Empire," said Dr. B. O'Connor on March 3, 1923.

us four years ago that the Catholic hierarchy over there desired nothing more than to bring about war between this country and the United States; and he did not mince matters when discussing the dangers of the situation. The pressure upon the world of the two great English-speaking communities increases daily, and Rome (like Moscow) feels that its growth must be arrested. Both are non-Catholic, and their ideals are directly opposed to those of Rome, so a wedge must at all costs be driven in between them. Mediævalism, as Mr. H. G. Wells points out in a long and brilliant article[1]—one of the best things he has written lately—is threatened by the augmenting forces of a new order. He brings fresh testimony to the "drift of a very complex group of forces desiring the separation of America from Europe"; and the most powerful and dangerous of these forces, as Mr. Shane Leslie and other Catholics indicate, is the Roman Church. America, Mr. Wells thinks, is not diverging upon a line of her own, "but is simply ahead along a path that the other great constituents in the coming world must all presently follow." Obviously the Church cannot contemplate with equanimity a contingency of this kind. She feels, though she will not admit, that mediæval Europe is passing, and she kicks violently against the realization of those ideals which the new world, with America at its head, is striving to attain. In an English-knitted world, Mr. Wells says, Rome will "have a scarcely more important place than Babylon"; Roman Christendom "will become a local tradition and a province, just as Sumeria was swallowed up in Babylonia and the Empires of Babylonia and Egypt became memories and provinces in the Empire of Rome."

To avert such a catastrophe Roman Catholics must strain every nerve and exhaust their extensive repertory of cunning devices. The bulk of their propaganda-work in this direction is done on the other side of the Atlantic, but meanwhile England and Europe have not been idle. Faithful sons of the Church are busy making their contributions to the noble cause of sowing disunion between the two great communities who,

[1] "The Fantasies of Mr. Belloc, and the Future of the World" (the *Westminster Gazette*, February 16, 1924).

beyond all others, ought to be united in the bonds of friendship. Others are holding Americans up to ridicule and odium, just as England is misrepresented and made to look hateful in American eyes by dwellers across the water. Mr. Hilaire Belloc, backed by his friend and disciple Mr. Chesterton, is apparently convinced that there ought to be a divorce or separation, as it were, between Great Britain and her huge neighbour to the West on the ground of utter incompatibility. From his book recently published under the innocent-looking title of *The Contrast* we gather that it is impossible for America and Europe, particularly Britain and America, to coalesce or fraternize. " Closer intercourse " is deprecated ; there never can be any genuine understanding between them. They do not really speak the same language. They have different ideals, their destinies lie apart, and the natural inference is that each should go its own way without reference to the other. The impression we gather from both Mr. Belloc and Mr. Chesterton is that America is an essentially foreign country whose citizens have unpleasant ways and questionable antecedents, and we ought to stop thinking of the two peoples as cousins with natural affinities.

I need hardly say that Mr. Belloc's " contrasts " are palpably exaggerated, and that some of his facts and propositions are highly disputable ; but a *Spectator* reviewer is of opinion that the exaggerations arise from " well-intentioned propagandist motives." No doubt Mr. Belloc's motives are excellent from his own point of view, but we are entitled to ask the question, " Which is the special object of his benevolent intentions—his Church, or the country of his adoption ? " Once more we find ourselves up against our old friend, the divided allegiance of Roman Catholics, who are only conditional patriots. " If an Englishman," says that shrewd observer Professor Santayana, " likes to call himself a Catholic, it is a fad like a thousand others . . . but if he is converted really and becomes a Catholic at heart, he is no longer the man he was. Words cannot measure the chasm which must henceforth separate him from everything at home. For a modern Englishman, with freedom and experiment in his blood, to go over to Rome is

essential suicide ; the inner man must succumb first. Such an Englishman might become a Saint, but only by becoming a foreigner." [1] Mr. Belloc is not a convert like Mr. Chesterton, but he allows us to see where his heart really lies when, speaking of the European future, he says on the last page but one of his book, " Things return to their origins, and our own old Roman unity should revive." Mr. Wells regards *The Contrast* as " a very noteworthy book indeed " ; and, as a student of current events, I agree with him heartily in deprecating all such subtle analyses tending to cause estrangement. The " tendencious " quality of the work is indisputable, and the motives lying behind it can hardly be doubted. America is not by any means " utopia " to us, as Mr. Chesterton suggests that it is ; but we see no good, only harm, in needlessly irritating Americans or in lending a helping hand to those evil people who are trying to drive the two nations apart by engaging in a fatuous campaign of creating mutual misunderstandings.

The idea that dogmatic religion—that of Rome in particular —acts as a cement of society, and that orthodoxy's functions as police-constable are specially valuable in these democratic days, still persists in a good many quarters. The bourgeois Neo-Catholics of France appear to be especially infected with it. It is thought that law-abiding people, frightened at the Bolshevist ogre, should rally round the Black International as a protection against the Red. There may be something in the argument, but we should not lose sight of the fact that " religion " nowadays is much less conservative than it used to be. Anxious to be on the winning side, and to atone for past errors, it is eagerly wooing the lusty stripling, Democracy, and clasping the extremists of the Labour Party to its ample bosom. People were surprised when they read the other day of the Archbishop of Genoa clinking glasses with the Bolshevist, Chicherin, aboard an Italian battleship in the harbour ; but the act was not without a certain significance. At the recent Election in this country there were thirty-one Papist candidates—eleven of them being Unionists, three Liberals, one

[1] See *Catholicism at the Cross-Roads*, by Dean Inge, in the *Quarterly Review* for July 1924.

Nationalist, and sixteen Labour men. In Australia and New Zealand there is an anomalous, but very close, alliance between the Roman Church and the disloyal and disaffected members of the community. There are signs of a somewhat similar combination in Belgium. The Italian Popular Party is more democratic than Catholic, and some of its actions have hardly been consistent with law and order. We read not so long ago of 2,000 peasants, headed by a priest bearing a crucifix, marching to seize their neighbours' lands ! The priests also joined hands with the Socialists in the successful attempt to corrupt portions of the Italian Army at Caporetto and elsewhere. In New York Tammany Hall may fairly be described as a Papist preserve, and the Latin religion is rightly regarded as a disturbing and disintegrating force in the country generally. The Roman Catholic hierarchy and clergy of Ireland have not exactly shown themselves to be efficient guardians of public order. The bishops encouraged rebellion on " moral and religious " grounds. They used their vast spiritual powers to overthrow our Government, while accredited theologians of the Church were freely quoted by clerical politicians to prove that the homicide they advocated was not unchristian. Priests asserted that the assassination of soldiers and policemen was not sin, but political warfare, and the Communists naturally agreed. Meanwhile it is a pleasure to be able to state that certain prelates of the Roman Church in England are becoming alive to the danger of making their religion an agent for the advancement of Socialistic principles, and are warning the faithful against " co-operation in schemes of social betterment which are steeped in dangerous religious theory " ; [1] but there are not many who have the courage to speak out in this fashion. On the other hand, by way of set-off to such moderating clerical influences, there is the case of the Colonial bishop who, preaching in Westminster Abbey the other day, pronounced a long and glowing eulogy upon Mahatma Gandhi. The congregation were told that that prince of agitators, who is responsible for much shocking outrage, is a saintly character who will take a place in history " high among the prophets,

[1] The *Tablet*, March 1, 1924.

only less than Christ Himself."[1] Thus does orthodoxy of a certain type revere and cherish the worst enemies of order and of our Empire. Let me add that a good many of the Anglo-Catholic clergy are as badly infected with the Marxian bacillus as they are with the Roman: they preach class-warfare, and offer us a heady blend of reaction in religion and something like Bolshevism in politics.[2] But such secularized Christianity is of little value in the world, and working people are not as a rule greatly impressed with it. "Catholics" of all shades know very well what turmoil and disorder would ensue if their efforts to convert England and America to their views achieved any considerable measure of success; but they care for none of these things so long as the supposed interests of their Church are being promoted.

To sum up briefly, it is in truth and charity that dogmatic religion principally fails; and the Churches are being ill served by many professing Christians who set faith at odds with reason. The cuttlefish tactics that are employed in theological controversy, added to a party spirit which seems to be ever growing in intensity, together make a bad showing. If it be true that, as Dr. Inge recently said, "intellectual honesty is to a large extent strained out of the Church"; if those Roman Catholics are right who tell us that orthodoxy spells of necessity perpetual brawling, the time will surely come when civilized mankind will cease to look to ecclesiastics for moral or spiritual guidance. The Ultramontane and the Bolshevist still remain "the two enemies of civilization"; and both of them, whether acting singly or in combination one with the other, must be fought resolutely.

[1] See an excellent article in *Blackwood's Magazine* for June 1924. We gather from Lord Olivier that Mr. C. R. Das—whom few Indians regard as a saintly man—ought to be given the third place in a very august trinity.

[2] We read in *The Times* the other day of electioneering curates in East London described as "going about with the Crucifix in one hand and the Red Flag in the other." A Cornish curate, speaking for the Socialist candidate, said that the Red Flag was God's flag, because it was the people's flag. In this view the real leader of the Labour Party would seem to be, not Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, but Christ Himself.

CHAPTER XXI

THE NEW MYSTICISM

THE plain man is not greatly concerned about the disputed question whether Christ said, or did not say, that He came to send a sword into the world; but he has quite made up his mind that this perpetual squabbling over religion is a social nuisance and a distinct repudiation of Christianity's fundamental principles. He sees that sectarianism as expressed in all the creeds turns men into apes and tigers, and he would prefer to let these animals die and to eradicate from people's minds the notion that there is a sanctifying efficacy in the mere shedding of human blood. Orthodoxy spells chaos in the religious world; and few of us have any desire to "conserve chaos," as Omnipotence, according to a French sceptic, was begged to conserve it at the Creation. We look forward to a time when the sectarian bantlings, which we have hitherto fondled so tenderly, will be left on the doorstep of some denominational foundlings' institute; when Catholic Tweedledum shall shake hands with Orthodox Tweedledee, and Keltic and Papist O'Flanagan shall no longer deem it his duty to blow out the brains of Protestant and Saxon Brown, in defence of metaphysical speculations which neither of them comprehend. Piety of this sort is ceasing to attract intelligent people: a little clear and independent thinking would surely be better.

Faith has been a comfort to millions in the past, but the credulity of the average man has made of her, especially in later times, a terrible story-teller. The old mediævalism, with all its faults, was a much more genuine, a freer, jollier, bigger thing than the pietism of the Counter-Reformation, with its "progressive narrowness" and cramping sacerdotalism—to

which we are now being invited to return. The Renaissance had opened men's eyes and enlarged their outlook on the universe, but priestcraft in the sixteenth century once more tightened its hold on mankind and fed the faithful on husks. Not all the Church's mysticism is that of Teresa and John of the Cross, and some of it is beyond question extremely fascinating, but the greater part rests on very insecure foundations. Both mysticism and faith are nowadays in sore need of subventions, and many churchmen are consequently seeking to turn an ancient enemy into an ally. Religion, having vainly tried to crush science, sees plainly enough that she must heal the long estrangement between them, or else be brought to utter confusion and ruin. Clear-sighted ecclesiastics recognize that, although religious fervour united to reactionary principles may knit men together in a common antagonism to new ideas, the loss in the end is apt to be greater than the gain. Doubts and perplexities are not removed by loud assertions of authority; the spirit of inquiry may be silenced for a time, but it cannot be subdued. The arrogance of long persecution and neglect of science has been dogged, as Baron von Hügel reminds us, by an appropriate nemesis. Even Roman Catholics admit that the solutions of great problems offered us by metaphysics and supernatural religion are only solutions for the individual: they can never possess universal validity. Their conclusions are always subject to profound modifications by the study of history, science, and criticism, by comparative mythology and experimental psychology.

This being so, an attempt is being made to close the rift between reality, as it was formerly understood—in other words between those metaphysical concepts which are audaciously assumed to be the only true realities, but which may possibly turn out to be little more than bottled moonshine—and Nature, or physical fact. It is being recognized that even the pathways to reality still remain unexplored, and that theology has failed to give us any intelligible or satisfactory answer to the riddle of the universe; so a large number of people are now turning to physics in the hope of finding at least some partial explanation of the mystery. It is worth noting that at Church Congresses,

in the pages of monthly magazines, and elsewhere, ecclesiastics have been saying quite nice things about science and those who devote their lives to its study. "Science is our best hope," says the Dean of St. Paul's, and it is admitted to be our principal vehicle of revelation in these days; the patient search for truth, we are told, is itself a waiting upon God. The scientist is no longer represented as a cold, soulless enthusiast of a depressing materialism, a rather inhuman creature who is content to spend his time mechanically cataloguing black-beetles or arranging geological specimens, and finds an unholy joy in contemplating "filthy phials of decaying animal matter." So far as devotion to truth is concerned theologians now confess that, as a body, they have much to learn from the scientific person; but they have nevertheless a few words of counsel to offer him. The Archbishop of York, while admitting the relativity of our knowledge concerning the various orders of reality, material and spiritual, thinks that men of science ought more frequently to associate themselves with religion, "so that a true liturgy may arise from the laboratory and the study may become a shrine." From other leaders of the Church we learn that the great constructive work which lies before religion is to "spiritualize science." If this means that physics is to be treated as philosophy, "the child of wonder," was treated in the past, and trained to be maid-of-all-work for dogmatic theology, I doubt if science will welcome the proffered assistance. She will probably elect to go her own way and do her spiritualizing for herself. What is termed spirituality is not the perquisite of any denomination; to take one example, did Mother Earth ever produce anything more spiritual than the eerie, superhuman, Ariel-like soul of the free-thinking Shelley? The word "spirit," which may mean any one of a hundred things, was defined by the late Mr. Clutton Brock as "that part of us which has certain desires which are not desires of the flesh." But these desires are not by any means confined to those people who go regularly to church, and they are often conspicuously absent in extremely pious folk. The physiognomy of the average priest, serving an ultra-dogmatic Church, does not usually suggest great soulfulness, or any special

sense of divinity. The Buddha himself would probably have been regarded as a rank atheist, and therefore extremely unspiritual.

Nor is it true that, as we are sometimes led to suppose, science is incapable of ministering to the "deeper needs" of our common nature. Science is catholic and speaks a universal language, but no single system of institutional religion can ever make an appeal to the mass of mankind: the Church, as a German theologian observes, by becoming Roman has ceased to be Catholic, and she is growing steadily narrower. "The conception of science as a body of thought embracing the whole of our rational convictions about reality," says Mr. J. W. Sullivan in his suggestive work, *Aspects of Science*, "has hardly yet been reached." Scientific ideas are not merely "constructive," to use a popular catchword; they minister to other than physical wants and material things. They have their moral, artistic, and humanistic side; they "express the harmonies which are found to exist in Nature," and introduce order where before was chaos. We may find in them, and in the motives and investigations of scientists, beauty and poetry and drama; and we may rest assured that, in Mr. Sullivan's words, they will be a contribution to our spiritual life. Coloured by emotion, they arose to satisfy certain human needs; they serve impulses deeply rooted in our nature and form part, not only of our intellectual, but also of our sentient being.

And these deeper impulses, as it seems to me, are steadily growing in volume: men think more and perhaps feel more than they did formerly. We find of course much frivolity and triviality, but also an increased seriousness. Serious literature is in greater demand; popular literature has vastly improved in quality, and workers show a keen appetite for the better mental fare that is provided for them. Speculative inquiry is now regarded as not wholly incompatible with good breeding. A moderate agnosticism is deemed permissible, and is even encouraged by leading churchmen who hold broad views. That insinuating charmer, the fashionable Jesuit "director," still holds impressionable ladies in thrall, but his grip is perceptibly weakening. Women, no less than men, are

beginning to think on wider lines. A vague feeling is abroad that we are about to witness a new renaissance, that the world stands on the threshold of momentous discoveries. Theological questions and the deeper problems of life are discussed, no longer as of old with bated breath, but freely and fearlessly.

In these more favourable conditions the scientist and the mathematician are coming into their own, and they bring with them a new sense, if not exactly of mysticism, at any rate of mystery. Indeed, many of them may be said to have actually been mystics in the higher sense of the word, and Mr. Bertrand Russell sees in the true union of the mystic and the man of science the highest eminence that it is possible to achieve in the world of thought: the greatness of a philosopher would appear to lie in a skilful blending of the contemplative and scientific impulses. Instinct or intuition, it is contended, is the creative, reason the harmonizing and controlling force. A good many people of an agnostic turn hold that there is no hostility, but rather a close tie, between mysticism and science, and that both are complementary and "based on fundamental natural instincts." If I mistake not, all the great scientists of the past and present possessed imaginations that would have done credit to any first-class poet. They worked hard and long, and after labour came the sudden flash of illumination. They were dreamers of dreams, men of intuitive grip and ardent vision; they told mankind beautiful fairy tales which had an uncanny knack of turning out to be true. They had presentiments of events and their causes long before experiment revealed them; they seem to have *guessed*, as poets guess, that things must be so. Newton, we are told, "invented" the idea of force, and the Einstein hypothesis originated in a speculation or conjecture:[1] the guesses of such men are the products of inspiration, assumptions on which a huge critical apparatus has to be concentrated for the purpose of verification. As Plato said of the poets, they "utter great and wise things which they do not themselves understand"; man, in the words of Emerson, "carries the world in his head—the whole of astronomy and chemistry in a thought."

[1] *Relativity for All*, by Professor H. Dingle, p. 56.

And the seemingly limitless possibilities of scientific speculation have lately struck the popular imagination, and they are finding adequate mouthpieces in much of our contemporary literature. If it be romance that we are in search of, surely it is science that provides us with the best type, the romance of exploration and mental daring. Nature, herself "the incarnation of a thought," is provocative of thought and an unceasing stimulant to the imagination. A tremendous drama is daily unfolding itself in the world before an audience which is growing more and more interested in its developments. New horizons meet our eyes, new vistas of surpassing beauty and incalculable extent are gradually being opened up. Mystery confronts us at every turn, new mystical possibilities are being provided for our minds; we recognize that miracles, as we suppose them to be because they are as yet unexplainable, take place every day. We have glimpses of a new world—stellar systems growing and decaying, the structure of the universe ever building itself into fresh forms of whirling matter—with the promise of many more marvels to follow. And the glamour and poetry of it all make their appeal to the amateur no less than the expert. When reason and learning point the way, and show us that their way is the right one, imagination will follow in their train. Fresh notes may yet be struck in the music of the spheres; the day may come when we shall view the new knowledge as mystical poetry uttered in the language of physics, and revel in the epic grandeur of its hypotheses. It is even suggested that poets may arise who, finding inspiration in these hitherto unexploited themes, shall chant to us sonnets upon relativity and perhaps give us the lyrics of the fourth dimension!

Meanwhile every day that dawns brings us fresh intelligence to energize our minds and increase our thirst for knowledge. The gradual unearthing of civilizations long since dead and buried serves to teach us that the ancient world did not lie wholly in darkness; true human enlightenment and "spirituality" are not, as a good many people still fondly imagine, growths of the last two thousand years. Excavators in Egypt, Crete, Mesopotamia, Central America, India, and

other lands are revealing to us the wonders and romance of a remote past; comparative mythology is telling us much about religion and its origins that we never knew before; and the enthusiasm that some of these discoveries arouse is quite remarkable.

"Beware," says Emerson in his essay on *Circles*—"Beware when the great God lets loose a thinker on this planet." Such a man upsets all our fundamental conceptions, our hopes and fears and manners and morals; gives us a new thrill by turning the whole world topsy-turvy, and puts all mankind "at the mercy of a new generalization." He may say with Heb. xii. 26, "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." One earth-shaker of this type was Copernicus, who disturbed everybody's peace of mind by saying that the earth was only a mere planet in the solar system, and that it revolved round the sun. But the Church insisted that all this was impious error, and that it was the sun that went round the earth. The latter doctrine, she said, was a fixed tenet of her faith and had ample warrant in Scripture and in clauses of the Apostles' Creed. Accordingly she rejected the theory of Copernicus, burned Giordano Bruno for endorsing it, imprisoned Galileo and made him recant. Nor did she cease to give official sanction to the old exploded theories until 1835, when heliocentric books and treatises were removed for the first time from the Roman Index![1] Time, that searches all things, has shown the weak joints in the armour of an Infallibility which bases its erroneous teaching on alleged divine revelation: in the case of poor Bruno it was the burned, not the burners, who proved to be in the right.

The latest herald of an intellectual revolution is Professor Einstein. He and his devoted disciples all over the world bid us subjectivize the abstract, and revise our fundamental conceptions about certain matters which we mistakenly supposed to be settled for all time. I understand that he

[1] Aristarchus of Samos (250 B.C.), and probably Pythagoras before him, anticipated the great discovery of Copernicus. People laughed at Aristarchus, and the Stoics accused him of impiety; but—more humane than the Papists—they did not burn him.

himself disclaims any connexion between metaphysics and his famous theory—fearing, perhaps, lest the shaky credit of the old firm might affect his own intellectual solvency; but the new doctrine undoubtedly trenches upon territory which philosophy has hitherto regarded as her own preserve. It has linked up physical forces with metaphysical conceptions, and brought the two sets of ideas into much closer relation: the one would seem to be gliding imperceptibly into the other. The philosopher tells us that physics, rightly regarded, is an abstract study; "all physics is metaphysics." But the day may come, and Dr. Einstein has apparently brought it nearer, when science will effect a unification between its theories and the cloudy hypotheses of transcendentalism, and the scientist will be able to say with some confidence, and perhaps a closer approximation to the truth, that all metaphysics is physics.

These knotty problems must be left to future generations to solve. It is nothing less than a new theory of the universe, and (as some people say) a complete reconstruction of the principles of natural knowledge, that we are invited to accept. We all believed, for example, in the concept of a three-dimensional space and an absolute space and time—mental abstractions that we invested with an unchangeable quality; but the Einsteinites bid us throw these beliefs overboard. Matter, space, and time are no longer to be regarded as the foundation-stones of the universe, and Mr. Bertrand Russell assures us that "it is unlikely that the reform will be able to stop short with space and time." Others go so far as to declare that "the last Absolute has vanished" and that the last stronghold of mediævalism has been stormed, but such over-confident assertions are obviously premature.

All this sounds rather startling, and for the present the new Pentecost from Berlin is only on its trial: we amateurs must be content to let our wise men fight the matter out amongst themselves. But the most ordinary person cannot fail to recognize the fact that every scientific discovery has implications extending far beyond the domain of science, and the implications of the new theories are obviously of a very far-reaching character. To put the matter at its lowest, it seems

fairly clear that a really great revolution in thought has occurred, and I fancy that Professor Whitehead is not far wrong when he says that the reaction on popular thought will in the long run be immense. Dr. Einstein and his followers have at least raised a host of new problems, made a fundamental change in the philosophy of many people, invested the human mind with a new dignity, deepened—if such a thing be possible—the uncertainty which envelops the unseen, and profoundly altered the status of mental conceptions which were prematurely assumed to be real fundamental entities. Nor can we overlook the troublesome fact that the new seer has a claim on our allegiance which few of his predecessors possessed: his predictions and theories have to a considerable extent been verified by scientific observation and experiment, and some people will prefer a prophet of this description to a Roman oracle whose wisdom has repeatedly turned out to be folly.

Like most people, I am "only a child" in transcendental and scientific affairs, and I have not so far reinforced my congenital incapacity to fathom the deeper mysteries of the universe by taking the advice of Roman ecclesiastics and consulting the Catholic Church. The ramifications of the general theory of Relativity are a sealed book to all but a small body of initiates; the rest of mankind, as I have said, can do little more than study the conclusions at which the experts have arrived, and form the best judgment they can as to their credibility. It is our human misfortune that we are compelled again and again to make a decision, based perhaps on insufficient grounds, about all sorts of important matters. The more we think, the greater our knowledge and understanding, the more cosmical nuts our weary brains find to crack; but, however inadequately equipped for the task we may be, if we are honest we are *forced* to make the attempt to reach some conclusion in the light of such learning as we can acquire. We all construct, or accept, hypotheses to account for the difficulties that confront us, and order our lives by postulates which at present cannot, and perhaps never will, be verified. Let us, therefore, be careful to select—on our own initiative, and free from external dictation—the best and most probable, the most

fruitful and ennobling, from the mass of hypotheses that are offered us. Let us follow the most reliable guides that we can find, and examine with every care the credentials of the men whom we elect to be our instructors. The ultimate arbiter in our choice—whatever it be—is, and always must be (as Cardinal Newman admitted), private judgment: even the selection of the priest as educator is an exercise of that judgment.

If it be objected that scientific or mathematical theory is too difficult for the ordinary man to understand, I can only reply that it is no whit more difficult than those assumptions of religious transcendentalism which "authority" commands us to accept. "Substance," Consubstantiality, and the Hypostatic Union are to me enigmas that I am wholly unable to unriddle. I find Einstein's "four-dimensional continuum" less incomprehensible than the Logos which so greatly puzzled the subtle brain of St. Athanasius. In either case we have to frame our conceptions from material taken at second-hand, and with minds hampered by early training: we are not yet fully emancipated, the fetters of outworn notions still clank about us. Many of us are only beginning to see that an Infallibility whose extent has never been defined, and which "pigeon-holes" its authoritative dogma in order to escape inconvenient questioning, is but a broken reed for the inquirer to lean upon.

Let us in any case, whatever we do or say or think, preserve our mental independence. "God offers to every mind its choice between truth and repose. Take which you please—you can never have both. Between these, as a pendulum, man oscillates ever."[1] And in his essay on *Self-Reliance* the sage of Massachusetts again asserts his right to intellectual liberty, and refuses to sell it merely to save the sensibilities of other people. I cannot but think that an exaggerated regard is still sometimes paid to this sensibility, at the expense of truth. We are urged to be very careful not to wound devout and tender souls: the "aged parishioner" must not have his faith shaken, but must be allowed to rest undisturbed in his

[1] "Intellect," by R. W. Emerson; *Essays*, p. 180.

dreams. Nevertheless "the law of consciousness abides. There are two confessionals, in one or the other of which we must be shriven." We must either elect to satisfy our relations to our neighbour, or else reconcile our own conscience, dispense with the popular code, and absolve ourselves. And I, for one, would prefer with Emerson and Carlyle to be myself rather than an echo, to go my own way, to beat out my own music to the best of my poor ability, obey those covenants which have been delivered to me, and which make a genuine appeal to my understanding—even though, by so doing, I offend against some unwritten rules of conventionality and become a hissing and a reproach to the orthodox lady next door.

"What is truth," people ask, "if all alleged truth is only relative to our perceptions and understandings?" I must confess myself unequal to the task of giving an adequate answer to this question, but we can at least do our best to steer clear of patent falsehood. And there is one lesson in particular that we may all learn from the new mysteries—the lesson of intellectual humility. We may regard them from the purely scientific standpoint, or see in the recent shakings of the earth an exercise of the creative spirit of God: in either case they have had the effect of making some of us *think*. And the more we think, the less warrant we find in transcendental theory—of any description—for the dogmatic temper. For many centuries man's spirit has ached at the thought of his own insignificance; so he has been told, and has fondly believed, that he, a tiny denizen of a fifth-rate planet, is lord of the universe.[1] He has now been dethroned from that high estate, and his "cosmic expectations" are consequently shrivelling; but he has not yet learned how little he really knows, or how to comport himself becomingly in that lower room to which he has been justly relegated. The traditional Christian, Dr. Inge truly observes, still lives mentally in a pre-Copernican universe; very few of us have really shaken off the notion that we are quite important items in the scheme of things. Geocentrism was the warrant of anthropocentrism, and

[1] The stellar universe, we have lately learned on high Catholic authority, was presumably created for the "consolation of God's elect."

we have it on Mr. Russell's authority that this system is still the unconscious premiss of most metaphysical systems. A good many people are even more immodest in their claims; they continue to cherish the delusion that they alone are in a very real and special sense "the sons of God," sole heirs of celestial wisdom, and "exclusive possessors" of Divine illumination. They forget that the Divine light (as is now pretty generally admitted) shines outside the Churches, and that it was so shining long before our era. It is their mistaken view that they are not in the roll of common men, but bearers of a message delivered to nobody else; and, in support of this view, they adopt the airs and methods of the terrorist, defend imposture with a mint of useless erudition, and constitute themselves "executioners of the Infinite." It is surely time to have done, once and for all, with such heady foolishness and unmannerly arrogance.[1]

The new teaching reinforces that of the ancient Eastern sages by telling us that we really know very little, and that the less we pretend to know the more we are likely to learn. Patience, modesty, and a frank admission of ignorance would seem to be the truer piety and the surer road to progress: above all, we must disobey the futile fanaticism which bids men run away from the truth in a panic and bury their heads in the sand. It was a shrewd saying of Carlyle's that the brave man is also on the whole the wisest and best: if he were not brave, he never had been wise. If we turn pale at facts and boycott certain opinions, if our eyes are too weak to stand new lights, we cannot expect to rise in the human scale. Truth does not reveal herself to cowards or weaklings, and our heritage of mental freedom is well worth fighting for. Fear not only makes people weak and mean, it also deprives them of their

[1] Even Newman, who thought that heresiarchs ought to be exterminated like vermin, seems to have shared this view. We learn from his Roman Catholic biographer how deeply he resented the insolence and bullying of his Ultramontane persecutors: like Hannibal's elephants he "never could learn the goose-step." "O my God," he cried in his bitterness of heart, "I seem to have wasted these years that I have been a Catholic. What I wrote as a Protestant has had far greater power, force, meaning, success, than my Catholic works, and this troubles me a great deal" (Ward's *Life of John Henry, Cardinal Newman*, vol. i. p. 578).

humanity and common sense. Hence springs the dreadful spirit of Papist ferocity—rightly described by the Dean of St. Paul's as " the cruellest spirit on earth "—a thing wholly out of tune with the civilized sentiment of these days, imperfect as it still is. The Catholic Church has poisoned the minds of men with her revolting conceptions of the Deity as a sort of celestial Demon ; and these notions have expressed themselves in a callous indifference to human suffering, and given sanction to deeds of the most horrible cruelty. The jealous gods created by savages have had blood enough : if they are still athirst for more, it is not our business to supply them with it. There are misery and strife enough in the world as it is. Our trust is in the unknown future, in some " storage of beneficent forces which we cannot yet see," in man's undoubted capacity for improvement, and in a new enlightenment which shall make us see the folly of the old evil ways. Men cry out for faith, when what they really want is more hope and charity. While our hearts are failing us for fear, it may well be that the gloom of our present situation, of our ignorance and uncertainty, is the darkness before the dawn of higher and better things : there is much truth in Oliver Cromwell's aphorism, that a man never rises higher than when he knows not whither he is going.

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